

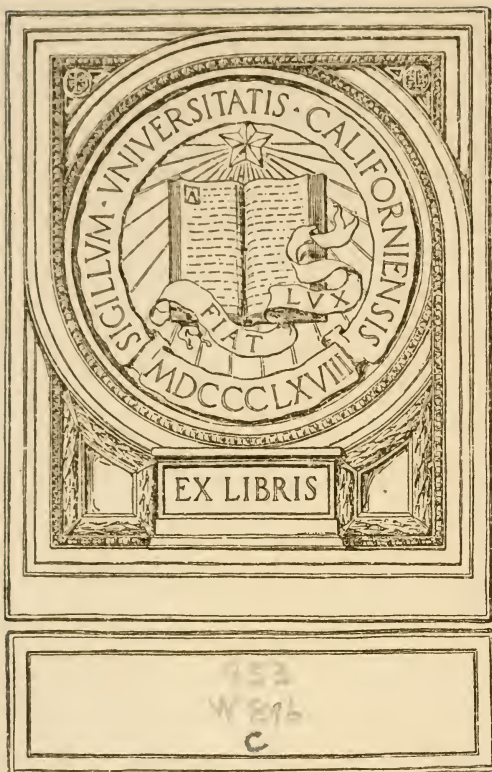
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THE COLLECTED
POEMS OF
MARGARET L.
WOODS





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THE POEMS OF WILLIAM
WATSON. Selected and Arranged
by J. A. SPENDER. With a Portrait.
Two Volumes.

THE POEMS OF ERNEST
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THE BODLEY HEAD

THE COLLECTED POEMS
OF MARGARET L. WOODS



Margaret L. Woods.

THE
COLLECTED POEMS
OF
MARGARET L. WOODS

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF LITERATURE

MEMBER OF THE ACADEMIC COMMITTEE OF THE R.S.L.

WITH A PORTRAIT IN PHOTOGRAVURE

LONDON : JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD
NEW YORK : JOHN LANE COMPANY
TORONTO : BELL & COCKBURN. MCMXIV

WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES

WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES

1865
1914
MAY 18

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NOTE.—*The poems against the titles of which an asterisk is placed appear now for the first time in a published volume.*

THE COLLECTED POEMS
OF MARGARET L. WOODS

LONDON POEMS



THE PASSING BELL

IN MEMORIAM

GEORGH GRANVILLE BRADLEY S.T.P.

Decani Westmonasteriensis

Qui media nocte

XIII mensis Martii MCMIII

Deo animam beatam reddidit

SILENT the bell hung in the tower and waited.

Under, in luminous channels of the city,
The lights went whirling in a fiery swarm.

Fathomless night

Brooded in heaven with dim receded stars.

Posuisti me in tenebrosis

Silent the bell hung in the tower and waited.

Far underneath raved the tempest of London,

The shallow storm of our life,

Under the abyss of everlasting silence.

et in umbra mortis.

The bell hung in the dark tower and waited.

Beneath the bell, each in his sepulchre,

Slept on the austere dead.

In tenebris stravi lectulum

One after one under the dominant tower

The living laid them down,

Even as the dead they rested, but their warm

Life rested not, Life that pursues in slumber,

Life that may never pause nor taste remission.

et in pulvere dormiam.

Aloof the bell brooded above the city.

Then to the man watching beneath at midnight
 In the dark bell imprisoned voices whispered,
 Heard but of him watching beneath at midnight,
 In the iron silence stirred spectres of sound.

Cor meum conturbatum est,

Death with hounds of Fear stirred in the darkness.
 The ghosts of sound prisoned within the silence
 Eddied about the bell, voices of anguish :

“O loose us, thou that watchest !

Rain us abroad, scatter us, a hail of fear,
 On dark roofs and the shining hurry of streets.
 Hear, thou unheeding city, drunken with Life !

Hear, ye souls of Life,

Whether of those that sleep or those that waken !

Formido mortis cecidit super me

Such is the doom of Death, none may escape it.

“Lone must he lie, comfort may not come near him,
 The dead are separate from him and the living.

Death will have no companions.

Cold is his bed, what though with warmth encompassed,
 His homely bed, where long secure he slumbered,
 Falls from him, Death drags down the obscure abyss

Slowly his fainting flesh.

Darkened his eyes, never lamp may lighten them.

Love cannot touch, Pity may not approach him.”

sicut umbra quum declinat.

Silent the bell hung in the tower and waited.

Still under silence urged the spectral voices :

“Ye whose perpetual pulses rock your slumber

With hushed beat of Life, ye that keep vigil,

Hear the word of Death !

The just man dies, the sinners also perish,

Death hath but one dominion.

Unus introitus est omnibus ad vitam,

One is the end, whether ye rest or labour,
Whether ye seek wisdom or else pursuing
Pleasure or power toil.

Death with indifferent hand prepares one guerdon,
With darkness fills the brain and the hands with dust.

et similis exitus.

Now is the hour of Death and the hour of Birth.

“Ye that bring forth to-night in the obscure city,
Unto what end the anguish of your travail?
His mother bore with pain, yet with rejoicing
—All Death inherits—

Him who with pain here is from life released.

Sic et nos nati desivimus esse.

Now shall the bell utter the word of Death.”

Lo in profound night, when hardly audible,
London beneath, whispering, stirred as in slumber.
Far above it, above its wandering mists,

Under the tranquil stars,

Solemn and deep the bell spoke in the silence :

Pax Dei

Spoke as alone with God in benediction.

“Peace to all souls, calm after toil and tumult,
Peace as of him whose labour is accomplished,
Praise unto God for life and death consummate,
Thanks to God the giver !”

High, as above the earth a spirit ascended,
Pausing, pronounced the great word of blessing,

quae exsuperat omnem sensum.

The deep bell spoke in the gulf of midnight.

The mighty voice, having communed with silence,
Rolled o’er the immense city resonant
In long waves of sound,

Qui confidunt in Illo intelligent veritatem.

Death unto Life uttering high messages.

Even as a wind sweeps from the face of heaven,
Heaps underfoot, confused and mountainous mass,
The crested clouds, showing in sudden glory,
Height beyond height, the stars,—
So from the face of Life triumphant Death
Scatters and drives the dim clouds of living.

In lumine Tuo videbimus lumen.

Life re-emerges, tranquil, shining, august.
So did the man watching beneath at midnight,
Hear how the sound of Death
Over the city hung in benediction.
It blessed the calm dead, the strenuous living,
All souls of the just.

Hidden in dark rooms of the teeming city,
Spirits of love heard it, consoled in slumber,

Pax est electis Ejus.

And Peace replenished the deep wells of the soul.

Birth also it blessed, and the joy of mothers ;
For so in the old time, the hardly remembered,
The bright soul of the dead
Came unto earth, welcome and meet to be welcomed
Now having achieved, enlightened, enjoyed,
Welcome the dear soul returns to its Father.

Justorum autem animae

Now is the hour of Death and the hour of Birth.

He who below the tower mourned in his vigil,
Under that sound heard the impenetrable
Majestic silence of sepultured Time ;
And heard the dead man's years
Falling as water falls, spilt from a cup
Into the weltering, vague, transforming sea.

So did the counted years
Fall and be mingled with the infinite Past.
in manu Dei sunt.

The bell tolled them down into Eternity.

The long ebb of Life, hushed in subsidence.

He heard and all waters
Flowing to the vast, unfruitful, infinite sea.
Beheld risen from the sea, the eternal waters
Forever feeding, adorning the fruitful earth.

Also the dead man's years,
Secret, diffused, feeding the heart of the world ;
Non tanget illos tormentum mortis.
And shroudless stars brightening about the earth.

Then in the tower, under the assembled stars,
Over the sceptred dead, the ministrant living,

Each in their place of rest,
He saw one Angel brood, toil and repose
Blessing, the Angel of the ineffable Peace.
Pax in aeternum Dei.
Slowly the bell ceased on the listening midnight.

THE BUILDERS

A NOCTURNE IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

AUGUST 17, 1902

I

ON what dost thou dream, solitary all the night long,
Immense, dark, alone, shrine of a world ?

Hardly more silent in old long-buried cities
The empty shrines and immemorial tombs

Of extinct gods and kings of perished empires ;
For they hear in flood-time, a vast and urgent
 whisper,
Great rivers flowing, the moon looks on them.
 And thou hearest
Sweep around the silent shores for ever
 The dim roar of London.

The moon looks on Thebes, looks on the valley
Of buried kings, on enormous ruined Karnak ;
She beholds Baalbek, with her wan indifference
Beholds where once Babylon was, nothing.
 On thee seldom she looks,
For a cloud hides thee by day, a fiery cloud
Shadows thee by night, the intense atmosphere
 Of ardent life.

Yet on thee also the moon will sometimes look,
Her cold fire of heaven, penetrating, pure,
 Burn in the South,
Pouring silver light where he sleeps ethereal,
The delicate fervent seer of all thy memories.

Now darkness prevails, unfathomed night
 Hath not conceived the moon ;
Now over all thy graves the drowning dark
 Spaciously flows.

II

And what if darkness be there, over all thy graves ?
Thou art never wholly obscure, for the stars and the
 moon
That illumine and darken dead cities are seldom for
 thee,
But the living light of London, that is thine own.
 Flame upon flame

It is strung on the edge of the roaring, hurrying
street,
Fevered it shakes in the gust of the whirling city ;
Here calm and estranged
It floats and fades, weaving a shadowy woof
In the solemn deep of thy grey ascending arches.

Far in their hollow night the glimmer of London
Is woven with texture of dreams, phantoms are there,
Vaguely drifting, as pale-winged wandering moths
Drift on the summer dark out of the abyss.

Who has beheld them, the feeling tenuous hands,
About the stone clinging, the carven crumbling
Work that they wrought ere they lay in forgotten
graveyards ?

Poor blind hands !

As wan sea-birds cling on untrodden ledges
And pinnacles of a lone precipitous isle
Or giant cliff, where under them all is mist
And the sullen booming of an unpacified sea,
So do the phantoms cling on thy wind-worn ledges
And æry heights, thou grey isle of God.

When the stars are muffled and under them all the
earth

Is a fiery fog and the sinister roar of London,
They lament for the toil of their hands, their souls'
travail—

“ Ah, the beautiful work ! ”

It was set to shine in the sun, to companion the stars
To endure as the hills, the ancient hills, endure,

Lo, like a brand

It lies, a brand consumed and blackened of fire,
In the fierce heart of London.

Wail no more, blind ghosts, be comforted,
 Ye who performed your work and silent withdrew
 To your grand oblivion ; ye who greatly builded,
 Beyond the hand's achievement, the soul's presage.

III

Fain would my spirit,
 My living soul beat up the wind of death
 To the inaccessible shore and with warm voice
 Deep-resonant of the earth, salute the dead :
 Like him who in corporeal substance climbed
 The Mount of Absolution and saw before him
 His shadow move, whereon the unbodied souls
 Looked marvelling and held far off converse.

But he spake to them of Earth,
 Of Italy, the towered familiar cities
 And wide shores Italian rivers wash.

I also would bring
 To the old unheeded spirits news of Earth ;
 Of England, their own country, choose to tell them,
 And how above St. Edward's bones the Minster
 Gloriously stands, how it no more beholds
 The silver Thames broadening among green meadows
 And gardens green, nor sudden shimmer of streams
 And the clear mild blue hills.

Rather so high it stands the whole earth under
 Spreads boundless and the illimitable sea.

It beholds the Himalayas and the peopled plains
 The five rivers water, alien fields
 Of other verdure, old strange-coloured towns
 Of the ancient East.

It beholds the flashing web of new-made cities
 Shot through with cars and a-throb with humming
 wires,
 The wheel of Life spinning with fierce motion

In adolescent worlds under tyrannous skies :
Unnumbered flocks it sees
Wild shepherds shear, and the blue shimmer of gum-
trees
Deep in the bush, immense, parched, snake-haunted.

Beyond our colourless factories and lone farms,
Grey by wan-willowed bournes, far, far away,
It sees exotic fruit and scarlet flowers
In gaudy markets under the groves of palm,
Where a blue wave sleeps on crystalline sand.

It looks on the grim edge of Arctic night
And gold-hunters frozen upon their prey,
Looks upon ice-bound ships,
On billowing plains of wheat and tropic hills,
Hung with great globes of oranges and haunted
All the night long by little wandering moons ;
On immortal snow and everlasting summer.

Behind our voyaging prowls the constellations
Plunge in the sea, the Bear head-foremost plunges,
The shining-girdled Orion and Cassiopeia
Fall from the zenith, falls the Northern Star :
But, O ye humble spirits,
Ye proud servants of God, ye Builders of old,
How far soever the forging engines drive,
High under heaven's cope
Is uplifted the work of your hands and your souls'
travail—
See ! not ruined and dark, but illumined, enriched
By solemn Time and the splendour of vast events,
Death and immortal things.

IV

A point of light ! Listen—a human voice !
The sentry pacing his round in the camp of the dead.

Half imperceptible falls the footstep yonder,
Silence engulfs it, a thing as passing and frail
As an insect's flight under the caverned arches.

Over what dust the atom footfall passes !
Out of what distant lands, by what adventures
 Superbly gathered
To lie so still in the unquiet heart of London !
Is not the balm of Africa yet clinging
About the bones of Livingstone ? Consider
The long life-wandering, the strange last journey
Of this, the heroic lion-branded corpse,
 Still urging to the sea !
And here the eventual far-off deep repose.

It passes over the rude majestic head
 And blue eyes of Lawrence—
Hark ! Over Clyde and Outram's knightly heart.
Ay, what fierce Oriental suns, what swords,
What whirling of mad Jehāds, what plagues of God
Have scarred and seared these bodies and brains beneath
 Marked with the brand of empire !

That footfall passes
Over the old grim conquering Admiral's body,
That once ran on the swift Atlantic surges
Hither and thither, tossing rudderless,
To reach the inhospitable Scillian shore.
And many another keen, indomitable,
That swept in thunderous battle long ago
 Round England's ocean marches ;
Men that have loved the salt spray's buffeting game
Better than sport and better than the dance,
To ride with the slant deck and mark the measure
Of the sluicing scupper's wash and the clap of the sail.
And they lie shrouded here, for ever hidden
From dews of night and the low-breathing air.

Here even Dundonald rests. What dost thou, footfall,
Pacing monotonous over him ? For he
Surely far out on a gaunt wind-ravaged headland,
A Viking corpse, should be buried sitting upright
In the black ship with his battle-comrades about him.

Nay, he sleeps well.

Nightly that footfall tells him tho' the grave is dark,
It is always dark, yet a still light is floating
Yonder among the banners, and all are there.

v

But the grave is always dark, it is hushed for ever,
There shall no sound triumphal, or consolation
Enter therein, or remembrance or any grief.

Wise compassionate death !

I accept the silence, the calm, neither with weeping
Nor the odour of new crowns come now to thy
sleepers ;

I who once in the solemn empty Abbey,
In the winter evening alone, when all had departed,
Came with tears, came with the rose and the laurel,

—Ah, how fain to arouse him

In the fresh grave !—left him there with his laurels
For the poet head, for his dear heart the roses.

They are loosed from the wheel of Life, they roll no
more

With a clash of engines under rolling skies,

They are set free

From the arduous mind, the incessant body free,
From all their labours rest.

vi

Yet in a vision
Of old St. Edward saw the Seven Sleepers

At Ephesus, and lo ! they turned in their sleep.
Not for a crying of names, their forgotten names,
Hollow sounds in an empty gulf of Time,
Or any mourner's tears :
But they turned in the King's dream as they heard in
their slumber
The shout of a wedding made by the hosts of the Lord.
For with noise of war and garments rolled in blood,
The foam of the North in his hair and a song of the
South
On his male lips, the bridegroom came to the bride.
There went a torch before him in heaven, behind
The earth was a shudder of fire,
And wrapped in a veil blood-red was brought to the
bridal,
That bride long ago : England was born.

VII

And I in a vision beheld how mightier sleepers,
The famous English dead, stirred in their sleep,
The Makers of old, the men who greatly builded,
Who made things to be, who builded empire.
They for no footfall of individual life
In my dream awoke or the foolish roar of the crowd
—Such could not violate the grand repose—
But methought they heard the feet of the Sons of Fate.
Whence came the rumour of feet ?
Whence came the pilgrim feet ?
From the ends of the earth, from the four winds of
heaven.
Over salt seas, through fire and the shadow of death.

VIII

Loosely marching, brown in their battle-worn dress,
The pilgrims passed through the languid August town

Came with new vows, with offerings unforeknown
Of young eventful Time, by roads how new
Drawn to the ancient doors, the ancestral shrine.
The splendid Future is theirs, but they are not
content,

They have said to the glorious Past, "Thou, too, shalt
be ours."

Wherefore the tongues of stone that centuries long
Have echoed our fathers' voice of prayer and praise,
Moaned to the dirge of England's dead and rung
To the proud acclaim of her kings, answered again
These tongues attuned to unheard cadences,
Echoing the ancient prayer and solemn praise.

Then through the vaults of night an Echo ran,
Crying to the dead, "Behold the inheritors
And harvest of your lives!"—bidding resound
Once more a hushed lyre.

"Awake thou lover of England, laureate son!
Time, the dumb earth, and the inarticulate soul
Of a Titan race conceive great images
And epic thoughts, far-looming secular pomps
And dædal pageantries demand thee. Rise,
Thou deep voice of England!"

IX

But the dead are sleeping.
They have fought the good fight, they have finished
their course.

To us the inheritance, to us the labour,
To us the heroic, perilous, hard essay,
New thoughts, new regions, unattempted things.
Not in the footsteps of old generations
Our feet may tread; but high compelling spirits,
Ineluctable laws point the untrodden way
Precipitous, urge to the uncharted sea.

x

On what dost thou dream, solitary all the night long,
Immense, dark, alone, shrine of a world ?

Thou, in the one communion of thy bosom
Gatherest the centuries, their brooding silence
Informs thy dark, a live incessant voice,
London about thee clamours ephemeral things.
And thou listenest to hear
Its hidden undertone, thou art ever listening
To the deep tides of the world under all the seas
Drawing to thee, and the slow feet of fate.

UNDER THE LAMP

I

UNDER the lamp
In the midnight lonely
Desolation
Of the flaring street—
Illumination
To exhibit only
The obscene pavement's horrible slime,
Spittle of smokers, foulness of feet
That have stayed their tramp,
Their everlasting journey for a time.

The usual pair,
A shop-soiled, meagre,
Night-wandering woman ;
Facing her, young and straight and slim
Under the long, loose overcoat,

A man grasps at her waist with eager
Hand, and the woman hangs off from him
With feigned reluctance, making a note
Here is no fellow-expert and common,
No counter-jumper to cheapen her ware,
Under the lamp.

A gentleman.
Ay, more's the pity !
O evil blending
Of alien creatures

By diverse ways to this one way come !
The smile of his mother is yet on his features
And the fair stamp of a delicate home.

Under the lamp
As plain is it written where he began,
As where this woman will have her ending,
Like a crushed worm in the mire of the city.

The harlot goes
With her customer,
From him importunate
Still does backward bear
With wavering eyelids, in half denial,
To raise her wretched price, the unfortunate.
Lamp after lamp
In garish, yellow, remorseless espial
Lights them towards her mean and sordid lair,
And each one in a mocking marriage throws
Distorted shadows of him and her
Mingled, upon the ugly pavement damp.

II

Now in his ears
Midnight is tolling

From the dark dome
With solemn resonance.
The fundamental, unregarded Powers
Whereby we are, it calls to our remembrance,
Infinity hovering above the hours.
That sound he hears
In the foul street, is heard too in his home.

Hearing, they close
Their books, the father
And mother of this man.
Here where they sit beside the musing fire,
About them gather
Dead faces on the walls, in a half-gloom,
Each one a high tradition to inherit.
With a brave sweetness, born amid the snows,
A bunch of early violets in the room
Breathes odour, like its own delightful spirit.
Here he began,
Here is his home, this raker in the mire.

For him those two,
Father and Mother,
Toil have endured
And hard renunciation.
How should they dream their blood would not breed
true?
A beast, a flower, a type being once secured,
Will hold to it. O subtle generation
Of man, more secret, hazardous, unstable!
Alchemy, making gold of things far other,
Of pure gold a dross most lamentable.

Darkly upwell
To the Mother visions
From the page put by—

The vile hidden commerce of the city,
The hunting, the pulling down of young prey
By hounds of Hell,
Anguish unspeakable, impotent outcry
Of murdered innocence, devilish derisions
Of souls emptied of pity—
And the common men who make these ventures pay.

Every man
Who this ware of woman
Goes forth to hire ;
Who brutishly this marvellous human
Being, whose thread the ages span,
Wherein immortal secrets hide,
As fruit crushes between the teeth of his desire,
And as the rind
Of fruit, his thirst being satisfied,
Flings carelessly into the road behind.

She on her men
With thanksgiving
Looks—on the dead,
High and aloof, beside the fire the living.
Soldier or priest, they have marched under one banner,
Fought seas apart, yet the bugle-call was one,
Answered to in like manner.
The boy is of their breed. Why doubt him then ?
It were a shame to doubt. Yet for her son
She prays, her heart burning with tears unshed.

III

The strong Prayer
On lightning pinion
Flashes about his soul ;
But what can it do there ?
The Life, that up in endless evolution

Led Man and leads, is absent from his soul.
Fierce primal Powers have him in their dominion,
They that rough-hewed the world in chaos and strife,
A mad dance of birth and dissolution,
And nightmare shapes, shrieking for life, life !

They cling to their prey,
Their heart rejoices,
A prey have they wrung
From their enemy, the Everlasting Mind.
They drag him down, they fill him with utter
Madness and whisper him with flattering voices,
Bidding him scorn the men from whom he sprung
And think himself a better man than they.
The Prayer can to his soul no entrance find,
For it is closed as with an iron shutter.

It does not die,
That Prayer rejected.
Like a hovering dove
It is drawn up towards the invisible flight
Of benedictions, breathings of pure Love,
The Angels of the Earth, continually
Streaming above us, potent, unsuspected.
Yet, as the Mother's prayer not unfulfilled
Could float upon the night,
It enters where she neither knew nor willed.

On a mean bed
A boy lies reading,
His candle-end
Flickers on the gloom.
Darkness is round, has always been around him,
Drunkenness, lies, dishonesty ;
But the persistent Life within him said,
"Come forth out of this tomb !"

And he all blind followed where it was leading.
In his lone night the Mother's Prayer has found him,
And he immediately
Knows there is light somewhere, somewhere a friend.

Life does not tire,
Begetting, conceiving,
Always the same.
Life does not tire in transformation,
Never the same.
The blind believing
Of the insect in her unknown progeny,
Her skilful, unerring preparation—
This is the first mystery.
And the last is the Spirit of Man that will aspire
To God, out of the dust from whence it came.

HIGH TIDE ON THE VICTORIA EMBANKMENT

I

THE SEA'S SALUTATION

THE immense life of the Sea, out of remote horizons
Rushing on buoyant wings, the breath of the Sea !
Listen ! You shall not hear your own heart beating,
The heart beats so quietly,
Neither shall hear through the roar of the huge tenebrous
city
The slow pulse of its heart, which is the heart of the Sea.

Here, where the bent river
Cleaves with silence and sky the loud confusion of London,
Moving inland behold the flooding silent
Majestic tide, which carries upward in noiseless procession
The long barges, the sombre glow of their sails.

Com'st thou an alien guest,
O unregarded Sea? Without purpose wandering
Sweepst thou silverly under the high towers and pinnacles?
Where at the shining tip of the bent bow,
Westminster darkly enthroned
Looks towards the enormous bulk of the City, and soaring
Clear, consummate, a vision—the supreme Dome.

Nay, for thou art the Sea. Lo, to the Imperial City
Thou comest, the great Spouse, having mighty messages.
Hear the word, thou veiled one, enwrapped from the stars,
As though thou wouldst hide from Destiny, the word of
the Sea!
'Queen, thou hast many lovers, but one lord—the Ocean.'

The tide knows it, the air is eagerly bringing thee tidings
Of the waters whose shining turmoil engirdles the Earth,
Of solitary ships moving in waste horizons,
Thy Life throbbing in their hearts,
Of the deep Ocean currents that sweeping on ageless
errands
Have carried thy Life in their courses and sown it through
the world.

The Sea scattered it abroad and again the Sea brings it,
Thy Life from afar, multiplied, regal, renewed.
This is the tide's report, proudly under thy bridges
Passing, under the clatter of wheels and of crowding feet.

II

THE GREAT ROAD

It came up the Narrow Seas, as a flock it gathered thy
children,

It ushered in thy ships,
Where away from here, from the endless tumult and darkness,
Serene and apart under the wide arch of Heaven,
Stands thy royal gateway, runs the road of the Sea.

Vaunt no more over London your proud streets, O ye
cities !

The road of the Sea is hers, even as the streets and avenues
Her towers look on, the road meet for her mighty procession.

No footfall rings there,
Nor the perpetual rumour of an eddying crowd ;
It is spread as with silk, it is paved with the perfect silence
of waters

Or their large primordial sound. Along it like palaces,
Like gardens ranged is the coast ; the way follows it
westward.

Yonder westward it opens, gathering in from the Ocean
All thy ships, there where the wind-worn bastions
And crumbled towers of Cornwall darken over the Atlantic,
Where southward wild Finistère flashes on the night.

Out of the old adventure, the single battle of Ocean,
Out of the wide lonely dazzle of water and air
Or the Giant Wars of the waves they are gathered in ;
Long, rapidly fading streamers of smoke they multiply,
Sail after sail they arise

This way and that, and on each, intent with a new vigilance,
The Captain walks alert and watches the narrowing road.

And low chaplets of light he sees in the gradual evening
Distantly burn, who beheld eve after eve but the stars
 Wheeling in a wide heaven
Unaccompanied, over the waste irresponsive sea.

Lights of the great Sea Road, they brighten in long ranges,
 Lone challenging lights
Out of invisible towers leap on the dark ;
Pierce it and pass, while ever behind them a phantom country
Vaguely appears, and again hurrying sweeps into night.
As lamps incessantly crowd and fly through the heart of the
 city,
Feverish sparks, he beholds here majestic
Pass without haste, without pause, lamps on the Road of the
 Sea.

So the night he watches, driving through dim waters
 The dark garrulous keel ;
While ever the whispering water asks of the garrulous keel,
“What bearest thou ?”—and the keel makes answer,
 “Life.”

111

THE LOOM OF LONDON

Strange far lives, manifold, each from the other,
Sundered and secret and hid, that the waste sea hath sundered
 And the round earth and the sun,
The marching stars and the soul's inexpugnable walls—
 Threads on the loom of London
The lives of the world are woven, and her life is the warp
 of the world.

But the grey weavers toil,
Sightless men, beholding never the woof tremendous
Nor its colours, but clamouring of idle things,
Weave incurious here in the darkness webs of Destiny.

Diverse colours : the colour of lions and of tawny deserts,
Of thronged secular shrines and dim bazaars,
Rich-gleaming, silent-floored—
The colour of populous plains immense and of mighty rivers,
And clouds flowing round the feet of the mountain walls of
the world.

All the fair colours of time-enduring cities,
All the ashen tones of rude ephemeral camps
And sudden seething towns,
The sheen of the wide pampas, the shade of the lone estancia.

The colour of monstrous Life, wallowing in great waters
And deep shadow of forests, where glittering-eyed
The stealthy hunters crawl,
And one by one, silently footing the silent pathway,
Dusk burden-bearers pass, balancing their loads.

The blackness of under-earth and the soft gloaming of
caverns
Under the green sea—
Thence with a swift shudder emerges, races a splendour
Along the loom, as of fabulous jewels ranged
On white bosoms of women, shaken with laughter, or sinister
Flaming century-long, sole, the eye of a god.

The gleaming of gold is there, of steel, the sword and the
ploughshare,
The long shimmer of rails vanishing in remote perspectives,
The solemn stain of blood,
This is the web of London dipped in the dyes of the world.

Blindly the weavers toil,
But deep tides are driving the measureless loom and the
spindles

That are spinning through all the hours with the spinning of
Earth.
The Sea wrought it, the Sea brought it, and therefore
exulting
The welcoming water chants with the garrulous keel,
"Life, Life we bear!"
And again whispers to the walls of the unheeding city
"Life."

IV

THE QUEEN'S SONS

The Tide of the Sea—listen, its breathing voice is triumphant
As the sound of clarions and trumpets heralding kings—
The tide whispers her "Hail,"
Mother! Rulers of men are thy sons, born to be princes
In dim far-frontiered lands. Government is on their
shoulders.
"Sovereign justice and order and peace they plant in their
footsteps,
They subdue the desert with streams, the vast ravaging rivers
With bridges of steel, alone they grip in a mortal contest
Demons, things that devour,
Plague, Pestilence, Famine, pitiless beasts,
The venomous, ancient, dark, elemental Powers of the
Jungle.
"Not in purple arrayed nor crowned with any diadem
Are these thy sons. From the deep heart of unrealised
continents,
Where as strangers they rule, they as strangers return,
Mother, here to thy heart.
Many may not return, so hospitable the alien grave.
One is the vital power that is urging them, whether
incessant

“They move with the travelling tide or are scattered over
Earth.

The Sea glories, the Sea in a rapture of rushing surges
Triumphs, his waves clap their innumerable hands,
Dancing before the Sun.

‘Mine are thy sons!’ he calls to thee, ‘Queen, rejoice in
my children.’”

V

THE DARK VISION

But the Sea is immortal, he knows nothing, he cannot
divine

Anything of Age, in his great heart he beholds thee
Young as his great heart,

He beholds thee ever immortally throned, a shining goddess.

What shall we affirm? Isis, art thou, of the secret
countenance

Impenetrably veiled, thundering darkly stupendous oracles.

Yet when the breath of the Sea,
When the swift water sweeps up the silver arc
To thy glooming towers, I with reluctant look have
beheld

A vision, a dream of thee, Mother. False be the vision !
Lying the dream ! Unlifted the solemn veil !

I saw in her palace halls enthroned, yet from divinity
Fallen already, a goddess, a mighty bulk
Bowed in the golden chair.

Deaf are her ears to the voices afar, to the tide’s admonition,
Dim her eyes, no longer with eagle glance
Sweeping from her high seat over the spaces of Earth.

With drooped eyelids she leans, passionate, eager, absorbed,
Over an interminable game, clutching at counters.

For these all she stakes, she gambles all, a gamester
 Debile, sinister, ridiculous,
 Monstrous Mother, pushing on the board with palsied
 fingers
 All the heritage, the honour, the goodly estate,
 The wealth, the achievement, the toil, the tears, the blood
 of her children.

Darkly behind her in shadow, a shadow looming gigantic
 Watches, a Titan awaits, eager, superb,
 The last, the impotent hour.

But she regards not. Away
 The dream !—with its long low sound as of desperate sorrow,
 Of sea winds that wail, with a saltness of tears
 Blown along her pale coasts !—Lady, the Sea salutes thee
 Now, as through all years,
 Since naked and nameless among the blanching osiers,
 First he found thee and crowned thee in waste dominions a
 queen.

THE GONDOLA OF LONDON

GIVE to me, Love, our London town,
 Now, when the hovering night comes down.
 What if away there still be day ?
 Naked sky over silver reaches,
 Bronze of bracken and gold of beeches ?
 Give me the woven shadows brown,
 Shot with the lights of London town.

Ours is a gondola as dim,
 Secret, and bold as ere could swim,

Shunning a moon that smiled too soon
—Black the boat over black abysses—
Harbouring rapture, curtaining kisses,
Lovers that laughed at Fortune's frown,
There—as we do in London town.

Tune of the jingling bells and fleet
Tap of the hoofs in an empty street—
Then as a ship from port will slip
Out we glide to the storm's commotion
Roar of a swift tumultuous ocean,
Surge of faces that glimmer and drown,
Foam on the sea of London town.

Little of stars our London recks,
Night with her fiery garland decks,
Light upon light as pearls strung white—
Fast through shadows and moony blazes
Topaz and ruby whirl in mazes,
Flash in the sinister veil, the crown
Royal and fierce of London town.

Ever the hurrying faces pass,
Phantom-dim through a rain-blurred glass.
Which of the swarm will heed if warm
Here a venturous arm enwind you ?
Here if lips should seek and find you,
Mouth and cheek of you, hair and gown ?
Give me my Love in London town !



PEASANT POEMS

MARLBOROUGH FAIR

The Scene is the High Street of Marlborough in the forties of the Nineteenth Century. It is a very wide street, the houses old, with red-tiled or rough-cast gables, or with the straight lines and fine mouldings of the Eighteenth Century. A pent-house runs under the houses, supported by slight wooden pillars. At one end the street terminates in an old Town Hall, at the other a large church with a fine conspicuous tower, and a churchyard with secular yews, divides the roadway in two. The street is full of the clamour and colour of a great Mob Fair ; shows, dancing-booths and stalls where all manner of goods are on sale.

A MINOR CITIZEN OF MARLBOROUGH PROLOGISES.

I WARR'NT our Street be near so wide
As London High Street, else our Fair
Would burst un. Half the country side
Do come a-pleasuring. See there ?
Hunderds and Hunderds ! A good few
However be n't a-come for pleasure !
Ourn be a tarrible great Fair
For hiring farmers' lads and maidies.
In washen smock and stockings blue
And in their hats their knots o' new
Gay ribbon, sit the lads a-row
By the Rose and Crown ; likewise the maidies
Wi' breast-knots. Farmers and their ladies
Walk past 'em slow-like, take the measure
Of one and t'other, while their leisure
Do hang on their poor hands like lead.
Each lad do look a wooden-head
Till he be hired ; then off he'll go
So sprack's a squirrel, shake a leg
In "John and Mary," stroll at ease

To see the world, how it do wag.
Lord, what a sight it be ! A crowd
O' folk, most like a swarm o' bees,
Gentry wi' boys and little girlies
In pretty frocks and shining curlës,
Farmers wi' jingling pockets, proud
And full o' victuals. They be waxen
Too fat, they farmers, in these parts,
'Presses the poor man, starves un, racks un.
Their wives in Paisley shawls, wi' broad
Bosoms that bear up brooches, linger
Some goods to buy and some to finger ;
Since more'n the richest can afford
Do load the stalls. Crockery and tarts,
Hardware and ribbons, pink soap hearts,
Wi' Cupids in 'em, lamps and wicks,
Good Whites and Woolseys, sugar-sticks
A-striped wi' colours, Parliament,
Pins, bulls-eyes, trumpets, jumping frogs,
And china figures—lambs and dogs,
Wenches in shifts, Shakespeare, the Dook,
And such-like things to ornament
Your chimney. Even the townsfolk throng,
And country folk have come in carts
And great slow wagons, many a long
Lone mile, or traipsed the footpath ways
By field and forest, for to look,
At Marlborough Fair. You see 'em gaze
About 'em in a kind o' maze,
Solemn-like, while the whole street's length
O' shows be sounding like a gong
Wi' dancing-booths and roundabouts
That play the organ, wi' the shouts
O' showmen, each with all his strength
A-bellowing *Walk in !* and vying
Wi' t'other in big boasts and lying.

Up o' the platform jugglers swaller
Daggers, and haul, yard after yard,
Out o' their throats long strips o' paper.
Dentists pull teeth, their patients holler,
Or don't—leastways to hear 'em's hard—
And dressed up foreign-fashion, quacks
Vend magic medicines, while Cheap Jacks
Drive a good trade wi' fun and patter.
Right i' the crowd, their carpet spread,
The tumblers make a ring and caper,
Stand on their own or t'other's head.
Then in a moment, such a clatter !
In comes the coach, wi' horn a-blowing.
Half squeezed to death the people scatter
Before it, while the women clutch
Their brats and scream. Down jumps a groom
To the leaders' heads, for they be going
Wi' dancing steps, don't relish much,
The Beauties !—see their rolling eyes
And skins a-quiver !—all that n'ise.
The London passengers look down
And quake ; for sure there be n't much room
For they to pass. They thought our Town
Were very quiet ! And true it be
When up above the din, the people,
Peering beyond the painted boat
That swings and drops, the flaunting gay
Picters that lie so bold, I see
The street-front, same as every day
Stand over pent-house gables red
With crooked lattices, it seems
Odd-like, as things fall out in dreams,
And stranger yet the tall old steeple
That takes of all our noise no note,
Or the gay Fair beneath it spread.

The Church Tower

At end of town, from churchyard yew
It lifts a high and solemn head,
The Church tower, having more to do
With quiet clouds that float and float
In heaven, than buzzing riot of ours.
The birds that hover and go by,
Seeking their business in the blue,
Heed not the Fair, but round the tower's
Gray battlements wheel in the sky.

The din we make a mile away
Is hushed, and all the heavens are still,
And the long downs where roads do climb
So steep and white up many a hill ;
Shepherds that watch the passing day
Careless of us, now stoop to fill
Their ears with that far-travelling chime,
Ancient, the timeless voice of Time.

*Hush ! Now through the brazen blare,
The human hoarse sea-murmur of the Fair
Here and there, a little heard
And more divined, I catch the word
A man would say could he but find
The dark things moving in his mind.
I hear the souls of alien things
Chance-medley here together flings,
And spirit winds that from the loud
Uproar, breathe sometimes o'er the crowd,
Whose faces turn, a glimmering mass,
This way and that to feel them pass.*

THE DANCING BOOTH

The Voice of the Fiddle

Hark, hark, hark to the gallant old fiddle !

Don't you know the fiddle's tune,
Up and down and round again ?
Brings her up the middle soon,
Frolicking and found again.

Plays you round a score or two
Times, nor seems to drop a bit,
Calls for more and more o' you,
Never lets you stop a bit.

Fiddler once did ply the bow,
But the tune outwitted him.
He would hunt it high and low,
Till the devil pitied him.

Flies his elbow faster now,
He's no more the guide of it,
Fiddle-bow is master now,
Devil sits astride of it.

Nights while Fiddler swills, you may
Guess the fiddle's fun begins.
Over stream and hills away !
Everything to run begins.

Weasel armies hurry past,
Keeper's birds to Neighbour fly,
Sheep o'er downland scurry fast,
Mare and oxen labour by.

Clouds are racing, out the moon
 Comes to see who revel there.
 Tossing woodlands shout the tune,
 Shadows chase the devil there.

Then when on your truckle-bed
 Winds o' night are rocking you,
 Round about your chuckle-head
 Runs the fiddle, mocking you.

Hark, hark, hark to the merry old fiddle !

The Voice of the "John and Mary" Dance.

Two by two and side by side
 Jog to the music, then divide
 This be *John and Mary*.
 Don't 'ee speak, there ben't no need,
 But to the music pay good heed,
 Nor of steps be chary.
 Cast your sheep's-eyes now awhile,
 Till she blush, but don't 'ee smile,
 Dancing *John and Mary*.
 You and she—What else do matter?—
 Dance together. Folks who chatter
 Land in some quandary.
 In a shädy läne a-walkin'
 Maybe *you* might do some talkin' ;
 Lads be that unwary !
 Paid you have and so 'twere best
 Take your moneysworth, nor rest,
 Dancing *John and Mary*.

*Over the clitter-clatter of speech,
 The harsh mechanic blare and rattle,
 As up some bright river-reach,*

*Where stones and shallow water prattle,
Sweeps with whelming overpour,
Breaks a big wave of the sea—
So there sweeps across the Fair,
Savage and deep, a lion's roar.
The Voice of Africa is there,
Of primal Earth, remote, immense,
Where Life seems but a Force, a tense
Fierce elemental Will to Be.*

*It dies, in shallow noises drowned,
While gaping rustics listening stare,
Not knowing what it speaks or whence
It comes, that deep and alien sound.*

THE WILD BEAST SHOW

The Voice of the Lions

Sleeping Lion. The dim o' the forest, the cavern dark !
Wait the drop o' the scarlet sun !
We'll up and away ere night's begun.
Oho, the glorious dark !
Day is dying above us—Hark !

Waking Lion. I have a dream. Will it never be done ?

Sleeping Lion. Night on the veldt will be falling, night !
Comrade, have you no thirst to slake ?
I smell, I hear the crawl o' the snake,
A monkey chatter in flight,
We too will hunt and will slay to-night !

Waking Lion. There's a thirst in my heart I may never
slake.

Sleeping Lion. Shadows are creeping from boulder and bush
(Up and follow me, comrade mine !)
With eyes of fire that suddenly shine.
What speeds to the river ? Hush !
Through the rustling reeds they trample and push.

Waking Lion. A nightmare of apes that chatter and whine !

Sleeping Lion. To the water, comrade ! A silver space
Where stars are swimming. The draught is cool,
There's lapping and wading in shallow and pool—
Oho, how the ripples race
From the feet of the buck that are flying apace !

Waking Lion. Come nearer ! A handsbreadth nearer,
fool !

Sleeping Lion. Eager and soft through the rushes creep !
The big bull antelope scents around,
He is off ! We are after him, bound on bound—
Oho for the flying leap
On the neck of him, claw and fang struck deep !

Waking Lion. In my dream we whimper and crawl
discrowned.

Sleeping Lion. Uplift a voice in the darkness, roar
Comrade ! The round Earth owns its King.
He has slain, he has come to the banqueting,
The people tremble before
His sound and are still to hear him roar.

Waking Lion. Brother, O Brother ! An ape is king.

The Country Folk and the Beasts

Rebecca. Aw Etherd ! Do ee smell 'em ?

Etherd. Ay.

Rebecca. Thee 'sniffs as beanflower were ablow.

Etherd. It be a main queer stink surely,
And I be glad to smell un. 's know
Us couldn' get the like at home.

Rebecca. No, that us couldn'.

Showman. On the right

We next come to the Roosian bear
What hugs a man to death.

Etherd. Aw there !

'A be a gawney ! Hug a man !

Rebecca. Etherd, ha' done !

Etherd. Try ef ee can——

Rebecca. No gammuting ! I'd not ha' come——

Showman. The King of Beasts, whose roar at night
Would terrify you, were he free.

Rebecca. It be a wonderment to see
Alive such Bible beastës, so
As sheep or harses. Apes, I vow !
Like as the ships o' Tarshish brought
To Solomon on goolden throone——

Etherd. Be lion Scripture ?

Rebecca. That 'a be !

When David were a shepherd, 's know,
'A lost a lamb along o' he.

Etherd. Reynard ! And Huntsman, säme as now,
I warr'nt found cause to pay un nought.

Rebecca. Nay ! By the beard, King David caught
The lion and smote him——

Etherd. By the beard !

'A were a Nat'ral ! Proper ! *That*
Ben't how to catch 'em. By the scruff.

I wonder now 'a weren't afeared.
 Dall it, be venturesome enuff
 To handle dogs, vighting or veeding.
 To Measter, 's know, I put it pat.
 "Etherd," says he, "Jus' go and haul
 Yon dog o' Miller's off. Tray's bleeding."
 "Measter," says I, "I don't a-care
 To touch yon dog." "Why not, saaft-poll?"
 Says he, "The dog 'a knows thee." "Ay,
 And I knows dog—that's reason why—"
 I says it pat—"I knows he well.
 That's reason why."

Rebecca. Both lion and bear
 King David smote, the Scriptures tell,
 And slew them——

Etherd. [*sulkily*]. Then volks weren't the säme
 In Bible landës.

Rebecca. Nay, small bläme
 To thee! But Tray ben't killed?

Etherd. Not he!
 Pounceful 'a ben't, yet bin 'a must,
 Fights like a good un—säme as me.

Camel. Umph, umph!
 Give me a quartern of desert dust!
 Neighbours, a hard life I have led,
 But sun there was and sand in the East,
 And a toothsome meal when I was fed.
 All past and gone! But they might at least——

Rebecca. Be all more like a picture-book
 Than aught o' real.

Etherd. An ugly beast!

Rebecca. Camel, he be.

Etherd. Well, he do look
 A Peter Grievous, to be shower!

Camel. Umph, umph!
 Few are our days on the wretched Earth

And dark, but I tasted a moment's mirth
Once in Damascus.

Rebecca. O my vlower !

Etherd ! My hat ! Camel have snatch un !

Etherd. Varmint !

Showman. What made yer get so near ?

Just let me come.

Etherd. That's right, Zir, catch un

Athirt the muzzle.

Camel. Umph ! Don't bother !

I've spewed the thing out

Rebecca. Dear, O dear !

My vlower be sp'ilte !

Etherd. There now ! They'll match un

At Harr'son's—thee shall have another.

Camel. No sympathy felt for me, that's clear,
Though the thing was a fraud—disgraceful ! Well,

At least I have made the creature yell

Almost as loud—almost as loud—

Damascus ! The hot, aromatic smell

Of the dim bazaar—with a noiseless tread

We pace in file thro' a turbaned crowd.

He sits in his shop ; I turn my head

Silently. Nip ! Like a rotten stick

The bone of his arm broke twice. The trick

Was good. Ah me ! I was young and gay.

Umph, umph !

Showman. The lions have not been fed to-day,

But a Negro Chief who knows not fear,

Will enter now these lions' cage.

Etherd. A gallus chap 'a must be !

Rebecca. O

Etherd ! I don't a-care to stay

And see un.

Etherd. [*with indignant surprise*]. Wants to go away
Afore he—— ? No, Rebecca, no !

Showman. You'll see this noble Black appear
Taming the lions for all their rage.

Etherd. See un down there ? I'd not do such
Voolhardy thing.

Sambo. [*to Showman's wife*]. Missus, dey bite—
Sambo in debbil of a fright.

Showman's wife. I'll give yer courage. Tho' 'tis
Dutch

'Twill warm your heart. Ain't it a treat !
You'd never get French brandy neat
But for them brutes.

Sambo. De lions will drink it
Out of my heart.

Showman's wife. Never you think it !
They know your thoughts, so bear in mind
Them pokers in my fire behind.

Sambo. O Brandy Spirit, make me bold
As Daniel in de den !

Etherd. Be cold
And all of a garn wi' sweat. I touch
'A's hand. Thee *be* a stupe ! Don't hide
Thee's feâce and never see'n inside.

The Lions. Brother, he comes !
Prepare, prepare !
Not again he escapes—
Tear him, tear !
What do we fear ?
Neither hoof nor paw
Has the pitiful one,
Neither fang nor claw.
Leap on him, leap,
Fell him and tear
The sweet flesh of him—
Ah, he is there !

His eye, brother,
Is a strange thing.
In his white eye
Is a red red sting,
And I must crawl,
Brother, I must,
'Tho' the rage in my throat
Is dry like dust.

Showman. As tame as dawgs they do their tricks,
Look at 'em jumping over sticks.

Sambo. Not dat way, Cæsar ! Here, Sah !

The Voice of the Whip.

Crack !

The snake shall sting you, belly and back.

The Lions. Brother, escape
Only the horrible
Eyes of the ape.
Didst thou but so,
Then were we bold,
Then should we leap,
Fell him and keep,
Claw him and hold,
Then should we know
Wretchedest shape,
Powerless and weak,
Hauled by the nape,
Screaming in fear,
Him—but an ape.

Sambo. [*loud*]. Ober de stick ! Ober de stick !
[*low*] Debbils ! De irons dey burn you quick !

Showman. Out of the cage now safe and sound
Will leap our noble-hearted Black
And ask of your kindness——

Sambo. My limbs do quake !
 How shall I turn me ! De Spirit make
 Dere blood as water, as brandy mine !
Showman. —to drink your health in a glass of
 wine.
Sambo. Ober and done again ! Ober de horror !
Showman. —to-night again, also to-morrer.
Rebecca. Lion ! At the bars how he do bound
 O Lord ! them great red roaring jaws !
Etherd. Ha' done ! Be worse than lion's, *your*
 claws.

THE LITTLE GIRL AND THE PERFORMING PONY

A little circle in a little tent,
 All warm and dim, but through a rent,
 A sunbeam looks, entering to light
 Upon the hair and cheek and white
 Frock of a little girl and just
 Tease her with dance of golden dust.
 Falls on a pony, too, in flitters
 A dog-like pony, rough and low
 And black, with eye that rolls and glitters,
 Blue-white at edge, following intent
 His Master's meaning with the slow
 Beat of a hoof, or bow of sage
 And serious head. Four-footed mage,
 How patiently he makes reply !
 " Who likes the ladies ? " " What's her age ? "
 And, " What's o'clock ? " Indifferently
 He tells, nor troubles what you ask,
 Scenting the oats behind the task.

The little girl. Little pony, lovely pony, if I had you
 for my own——
Pony. What would you do ?

Little girl. Jump on your little back, of course, and canter off alone.

Pony. Where would you go ?

Little girl. Down the street and in, pony, where the gates are open wide,

There'd be shadows on the lawn there, and not a soul beside.

Pony. So they tell you.

Little girl. Down the green garden ways, dear, where I'm not allowed to ride.

Pony. Oh Missie ! Oh !

Little girl. The weary flowers would smile at us, the merry flowers would nod,

To the patter of your pretty hoofs, that never mark the sod.

Pony. You'll get the stick.

Little girl. We should gallop round the meadow, dear, as fast as you could lay

Your little legs to ground ; they're far too short to run away.

Pony. When I want, they're very quick.

Little girl. I'd never tire you much, dear, because we'd sit and play

In the corner of the haystack, among the lovely hay.

Pony. Pulling at the rick ?

Little girl. I'd be your Master then, you with wise and watching eyes

Listening grave to all I asked, would bow and stamp replies.

Questions no one answers you would answer, surely, being wise.

Pony. Do you know the trick ?

Little girl. How old is Fräulein Krebs ? Think ! She don't remember, dear !

You should tell me, and I'd write it in her diary, large and clear.

Pony. Little girl, you're nine.

Little girl. I would house you as a hunter's housed,
in a loose-box like a room,
Straw for bedding, oats to eat, and at morning-time a
groom
Should with hissing entertain you while he put you on
a shine,
Little pony, lovely pony, if only you were mine.

Pony. Come! You're talking stuff.
Little girls are nice enuff,
But how much notice do people take
Of promises *they* make?
I'm older, and I know well
It's fairy-tales, the things you tell.
A little girl could never learn
Me a trick to earn
My living, that I can see.
But Master, wise is he
And powerful, doing the thing he wills.
Grooms they sit in buttoned coats
Whipping ponies up hills.
My Master helps behind.
Sweet is my sieve of oats,
Good to roll upon a bed
Of bracken deep and dead,
Where the green hollies grow.
Up in the oaks the wind
Frets; I am snug below.
Couched in the tent together
Drowse we in wild weather
Patiently, he and I.
Horses that shine as glass,
Grooms—well, they're not my class.
Thank you, Missie. Good-bye.

SHOOTING FOR COKER-NUTS

Plucked by many a dusky hand
 Were these and rolled on a tropic shore
 Of scarlet blossom and silver sand,
 Where the black men sit and nurse their knees
 And stare idly at blue seas.

Now these coker-nuts roll on the floor,
 Of Marlborough High Street in a pile
 Before the painted shooting-range.
 And here as there in the far and strange
 Country, they're making somebody's living.
 Over them see a matron smile,
 Swarthy and handsome and broad of face
 'Twixt the banded brown of her glossy hair.

In her ears are shining silver rings,
 Her head and massive throat are bare,
 She needs good length in her apron strings
 And has a jolly voice and loud
 To cry her wares and draw the crowd.

The Show-woman. Fine Coker-nuts ! My lads we're
 giving

Clean away ! Who wants to win 'em ?
 Fresh Coker-nuts ! The milk's yet in 'em.
 Come boys ! Only a penny a shot,
 Three nuts if you hit and the fun if not.

1st lad. Why thur now ! O' vire-arms I be n't no
 lover.

The pop of a gun do make I skip.

Other lads. Gawney !

[*Several shoot and all miss.*]

2nd lad.

The gun ha' beat this trip.

3rd lad. Do seem to toss the shot fair over.

1st lad. To right.

3rd lad. Thee try and thee'll discover.

The Voice of the gun. Bang ! Bang !

You pay your penny and you make your noise.

Ha, ha ! The little gun has beaten you, boys.

Lads. Here comes Dick Manders, keeper's son.
A gallus chap !

1st lad. A gallus cap,

Wi' ribbin tails, an' stuck awry.

3rd lad. Be Scotch cap same as gentry wear un.

Lads. Hi, Dicky ! Have a shot now, Dicky !

You're one to shoot ! He be that tricky,

The Coker-nut-shy, us ha'n't got one.

Now do ee shoot !

Dicky. I can't get near un.

Here, give it us. I'll have a try.

Show-woman. Ay, Sir, you know how to handle a
gun !

You'll ruin me fair.

1st lad. Thee'll vire too high.

Lads. Thee mind thy business. Dicky knows his.

[*Dicky fires and misses.*]

Dicky. Dall it ! This gun be a crooked one.

Show-woman. Try again, Sir. You'll soon take its
measure.

[*Dicky fires again and nearly hits.*]

The Voice of the gun. Bang ! Bang !

You pay your penny and take what you get.

Clever little gun will beat you yet.

Dicky (to the gun). I tell ee whatever, if Coker-nut-
shy

Be cunning and clever it shan't best I.

[*Fires twice, more wide of the mark each time.*]

The Voice of the gun.

Bang ! Bang !
Chap proposes,
Gun disposes
Of shot and chap.

Dicky. Dang the old gun !

1st lad.

Thee vires too high.

Point low, to left.

Dicky. Suppose you try.

Lads. Saaft-poll ! Be thee a-teachin o' we ?
Be afeared to shoot ?

1st lad.

Don't take no pleasure

In shot-guns. But as good as he

Can vire an' miss—in my old hat.

[*Shoots and hits the mark.*]

The Voice of the gun. Bang ! Bang !
Once in a while I make it easy,
Because my old girl's bound to please ye.

Lads. Dall it ! He've hit ! He've hit the mark.

3rd lad. Might ha' done it as well i' the dark.

Dicky. If ee'll hit un again I'll give ee a fairin.

1st lad. [*Taking nuts from the Show-woman.*]

No thank ee. The lady be doin' that.

For vire-arms I never was one for carin',

But I don't a-mind cuttin' a comb—or a Scotch cap.

Lads. Just hark to un, Dicky ! If he be n't darin' !
For the likes o' he—


Dicky.

I don't care a rap.

THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

Merry-go-round is a-turning, turning !
What will you mount upon, where will you ride ?
Merry-go-round is a-turning !
Where the gilded chariots glide

Merry-go-round is a-calling, calling,
Where the galloping horses arch in pride
Their elegant necks with manes a-flowing
And scarlet nostrils bravely glowing,
The dapple and white, the black and the bay.
The organ is high over every sound,
You can hear it calling a mile away,
It is whirling its galloping tune around
While the Merry-go-round is turning, turning !

Whither away goes the Merry-go-round,
Busily whirling, dizzily whirling ?
Say, on its narrow circle of ground,
Fast or slow though it go, it abides
And the company giddily, giddily glides.
Dabs of colour, red country faces,
A crimson feather, a grass-green sash,
The white of a dress or a bonnet flash,
Appear, disappear, and return again,
Like beads on a rapid revolving chain
That is tense with the force of its own motion,
Busily whirling, dizzily whirling. 

Yet with the wheel of the merry-go-round
On manifold roads do the riders travel,
On wonderful ways, in marvellous places.
They have drunk of a wind like a wizard's potion,
And the spin of the wheel to a rush and a ravel
Of colour and noise, a skein unwound
Rapidly, something meaningless, blurred,
Transforms the eddying Fair's commotion,
While the Merry-go-round, the Merry-go-round
Is turning, turning.

Over meadow and fallow with horn and hound
Goes the galloping gray of the farmer's boy,

And the soldier's son with a valorous joy
On the enemy's roaring guns has spurred
His bay, and the couple at ease in the yellow
And azure car—the peony pride
Of the sweetheart, the grin of the rustic fellow !—
Are riding like gentlefolks in a carriage,
The church-bells ring in a downland village,
And he is the bridegroom and she the bride.
On a white steed, with a bridle of gold,
The child in the broidery frock is flying.
Beneath her the suns of the world have rolled
And she sees enchanted countries lying,
With palm and minaret, fairy and Djinn,
Beautiful ladies and palace halls
Where the gold-fish swim, and no foot falls
And a king half marble throned therein.

But the Merry-go-round is turning, turning
Slower ; until as a chain drops slack
When the speed of it fails, in a moment, back
The riders suddenly come, descend
Amazed that the journey should have an end
And they be standing upon the ground.
But the Merry-go-round, the Merry-go-round
Above them still will be turning, turning.

Like the wheel of Life it is turning, turning,
While they wondering stand, with a burden new,
It is off and away with a brave young crew.
Watch how forth overhead they are faring,
Mounted and glorious, proudly staring,
O'er the humbled world they leave behind.
They are swinging the way-worn circle round,
Busily whirling, dizzily whirling,
They are swift on the tide, they are sailing the wind,
To shores where never a ship was bound,

To the Fortunate Isles that will never be found,
On the track of the stars that are yet to find,
 Busily whirling, dizzily whirling
On the Merry-go-round, the Merry-go-round.

But hardly the journey appears begun
And the riders firm in the saddle seated
When the flying circles are all completed,
The riders are down, and the journey is done.
Staring they stand, while away with its new
Spirited, arrogant, splendid crew,
The Merry-go-round is turning, turning.

*At evening, with the rising of the moon
And redder than the moon, begins to hover
A glare over the unwonted street and over
The thickening hoarse confusion of the Fair.*

*Hark, Hark ! Hurrying from the osiered river
And tangled hollows where they lair at noon,
A patter of hoofs, a shuffle of the bare
Broad feet of some huge semi-bestial rover !
The gross Immortals of the Earth break cover,
With panting chuckle run towards the Fair.*

*Soon shall bewildered shadows toss and wave
Hither and thither, fleeing from the red
Leap o' the naked flame, flare upon flare,
In whose harsh radiance out of darkness pushes
Fiercely distinct, each rude fire-painted head
O' the gazing crowd—till back the darkness rushes.
Lo, visioned in a momentary glare,
Once and again some shape portentous rises,
Ageless, renewed. The Immortal gods are there,
Wallowing Silenus reels in fresh disguises,
With rustic jowls the masked Satyrs stare*

*And grin about illumined booths, aware
Of the young nymphs, their old appointed prizes.*

THE VOICE OF THE ALE-HOUSE

Drink and drink, you country fellow !
Fool, your time and coin to waste !
Hark how the wise men sit here quaffing
Ale, in every glass they taste
Lurks a jest to keep them laughing, laughing, laughing.
Come and drink, you country fellow !

What would you pay for ? Pleasure, pleasure !
Here you'll find it, here's no lie.
Pay you may for idle staring—
Out you come with an empty eye.
Pay you may for a tune and a little
Shake of a leg, or a fairing brittle.
Ale's the good the golden fairing !
Haste ! I'll fill you high with pleasure, pleasure, pleasu re.
Come and drink, you country fellow.

Day by day, you country fellow,
Dull as beasts, with them you bide.
Ay, but the beasts have food and housing
Better than for you the gods provide.
Brutes would mock you could they think,
Till they saw you here carousing, carousing, carousing,
Till they saw how a man can drink.

All your days, you country fellow,
Still the self-same way you've spent.
Only a note you're sounding, sounding,
On another's instrument.
Take your holiday, make your holiday,
Now's your turn to call the tune.

Take your moneysworth, full measure,
Till you dance with stars and moon.
Songs at home you fear to troll,
Roar 'em loud for all men's pleasure, pleasure, pleasure.
Squire nor parson shall control
Here, your body nor yet your soul,
You're the master, country fellow.

Heed no more the foolish fiddle,
List the tune of the glasses' chink.
What of a maid will you win by dancing ?
Bring your wenches here to drink.
Drink and set the street a-dancing, dancing, dancing,
Set the church-tower running up the middle,
To a tune your ears shall hum,
Jollier far than flute or fiddle.
Steal away, you starers ! Come,
Come and drink, you country fellow !

GOODNIGHT

Now on the town and on the down is falling
Twilight in purple folds and in the failing
Day, the long-lifting high-ways glimmer white,
And black the homeward people, up them faring.
' Goodnight,' the weary homeward people say,
And back from cart and wagon voices calling,
Answer ' Goodnight ' from near and far away,
Echo along the darkening down ' Goodnight.'

The Hunter's Moon over the stream has risen,
A gleam among the poplars then a vision,
Large and serene behind their lattice frail.
The town deep down grows fiery in the vale.
Stealthily night draws on, but light in heaven
Lingers, a pure translucent spirit of day.

Here on the height, seeming of shadows woven,
Shadowless shapes, wayfarers go their way :
And deep deep in the valley peers the tower
Sinking below the vaporous seas of even.
With solemn clang the reverberating hour
Strikes, and the curfew bell begins to say,
Unto the soul, "Thus do I toll the day
Down where days lie, and none may back be given."

The Voice of the Church Tower

Time do I tell,
The hours in their succession,
Sound I their knell
And their resurrection.

Time know I not,
Centuries and seasons.
Deeper men forgot
Have set me my foundations.

Stand I nor change,
'Tho' as clouds above me,
Mobile and strange
Passes Life below me.

I the hour of birth
Sounded, I to bridal
This heaped earth
Summoned, and to burial ;

Parcelled out their days
In their time of labour,
Called to God's praise,
To waking and to slumber.

Now to you men,
For all your new devices,
Speak I as then,
Nor change with your disguises.

Need have I none
To alter, while with wailing
Life is begun
And goeth out with mourning.

The old Hours I dole,
The former admonitions.
Deep in the soul
Of man are my foundations.

Chill and more chill upon the hill deserted
Mingle the fluid shadows and vague moonlight,
Silence absorbs the last long curfew-chime,
The downs are faintly sighing to the night
With that mysterious voice whose whisper haunted
Their hollows and their temples of old time.

And now I know how long ago it faded
That day, which seemed a moment since yet here,
A ghost out of the abyss of time ascended,
A ghost long lost out of some buried year.
The wheels that ground the flinty dust are still,
The trudging steps have passed over the hill,
Towards no kind cottage hearth to disappear ;
But on to the ultimate void, where hang suspended
Sounds that will strike no more on earthly ear,
Sights that from earthly eyes are banished.

I have beheld in silver eld their faces
Who then were lusty and young, have seen them go

Pleased in their comely ancient country dresses ;
Have heard familiarly their chanting slow
Speech in grey villages of the flooded vale
Or on the downs' wan beautiful wildernesses,
Where stands the wheeled hut—while to and fro
Ran the dark shepherd dog and far off fleeces
Of wandered flocks in the low light were pale.

Day after day they have passed away and ended
Their time-worn world, held in the hills' grey fold ;
They are gone, they are silent, none again shall know
Their speech or aspect in their former places.
They are one with the majestic Past, they are blended
In pale procession with dim nameless races,
Whose monuments brooding in the waste behold
The secular change of stars. Along the height
The solemn pageant rolls. They all are gone,
And the long down is whispering low ' Goodnight.'

THE MAY MORNING AND THE OLD MAN

I

*THE Morn is very clear, the young Morn
Looks on the Earth, imagining all the Earth
Is as herself, new-born.
She beholds the hills, the dim colourless hills
Over the City of Towers
Dark in the valley ; drowning mists flow round it,
Ghosts of dead rivers, stealing through the valley.
Morn smiles on the Earth.
Answering, the hills put on their colours clear,*

*Young corn and copses gay and hawthorn trees,
Fair as enchanted towers
Built of young dreams and bright with dawns from afar,
Out of silver mists uprises the blond City.
It is Morn, it is May,
And Earth a moment imagines herself new-born.*

II

*But the Old Man—
For him it never can be morn again.
Beside the haystack in the field he slept,
But weary is he yet, though he has slumbered.
The load is very light upon his shoulders,
Yet are his shoulders bowed,
And like a laden man he climbs the hill :
He cannot dream his youth returned again.*

*Slowly he climbs, his shadow creeps
Before him, climbing the long white hill.
His shadow is weary and backward creeps,
Hanging about his weary feet.
The climbing lark sings overhead,
And hark ! the merry bicyclists,
Behind him on the hill.*

THE BICYCLISTS' REVEILLÉ

*Under the hedges the parsley is white,
The hedges are white with May,
Hither we come in the early light,
In the fresh of the waking day.
Listen, listen and follow !*

*There's a sunbeam star on your window-pane,
The cuckoo cries, " We are here ! "*

And the swish of the wheel down the long white lane
Merrily hums in your ear.
Listen, listen and follow !

Swooping and skimming high in their flight,
Mock us, our mates of the air.
Up from the valley and down from the height,
Farther than you shall we fare.
Listen, listen and follow !

The workaday world has foundered afar,
Under the sheen of the dew.
Come where a world like a flower, like a star,
Spins for an hour in the blue.
Listen, listen and follow !

*They have climbed the hill, they have conquered the height,
They meet new airs from distant skies,
Telling how far and fair it lies,
The Land of Morn, the undiscovered.
And swiftly springing from earth away,
As birds on rush of wings speeding,
Over the brow the bicyclists hurry
To the uninhabited, undiscovered
Wonderful world of Youth and Morning.*

III

*The solitary fields are wide
Where bright the narrow rivers run.
The buttercups of burnished gold
Uplift their triumph in the sun.*

THE BUTTERCUPS' REVEILLÉ

Brave, brave banners of gold !
 See how we wave
 Banners of gold,
 Lift them up from the dark mould !

Sun, sun, flower of the skies !
 We too have begun.
 Thou dost the skies
 We the gilded Earth surprise.

Earth, Air, never were seen
 Half so fair
 Before, with sheen
 Of gold above their blue and green.

Bright wings, messengers bold,
 Tell how the Spring's
 Banners of gold
 Flaming over the Earth unfold !

*In the Land of Youth and Morning
 All things seem but new begun,
 The Wonder and the Joy of Life
 Uplift their triumph in the Sun.*

IV

THE BICYCLISTS

Hither away where the waters gleam
 And meadows are buttercup-dyed,
 Over arches grey where Time is a dream
 And rivers of Avalon glide !
 Listen, listen and follow !

*Silver gauze the mists are floating,
Silver gleams the rivers showing
Among the golden, golden fields
Where willows spread their veils of green.*

v

*The Old Man comes to the brow alone.
He does not behold the Land of Morning,
But far away he beholds familiar hills.
And in the fallow, solitary
And old as he is solitary
Himself and old, he sees a man,
A tall man, leaning upon his hoe.*

*The wanderer fain would speak awhile,
Telling the sorrow of his soul
And all his weariness to one
That like himself is old.
His voice is high and his speech sways
Slowly with slow words, as the boughs
In wind of summer sway ; for so
Did country folk talk long ago.*

First Old Man. Mester, be't vur to Chillingbourne ?

Second Old Man. To Chillingbourne ?

1st O. M. Ay, for 'tis yonder I must go.

To Chillingbourne acress the down.

2nd O. M. Why, Mester, that's a longish roäd,
To Chillingbourne, a steepish roäd. Clear over hills you
see un climb,

Yonder so white's a thread he goes
Betwix the Clumpes and away
To Chillingbourne beyond the downs.

1st O. M. How vur be't, Mester, do 'ee know ?

2nd O. M. Nay, Mester, but a longish roäd.

Myself I never took no j'y
In travelling, nor can rightly tell
How fur it be, but a great way
To Chillingbourne across the downs.

1st O. M. It bean't for j'y I taäk the roäd.
But, Mester, I be gotten awld.
Do seem as though in all the e'th

There bean't no plaäce,
No room on e'th for awld volk.

2nd O. M. The e'th do lie
Yonder, so wide as Heaven a'most,

And God as made un
Made room, I warr'nt, for all Christian souls.

1st O. M. The Union, Mester,
Wer plaäce for me, they said. Aw dear !
Yet I can work and toil more willin'
Than young uns will. The world, Mester,
It be so chaänged, so chaänged it be !
They wun't gi' no work to awld volk.

2nd O. M. Nay, Mester, I do get a job
Most times o' year, for folks do know me
Through all the plaäce. Ha'n't ee no frien's
Down yonder, where ee come from ? Home
Be best, to my thinking.

1st O. M. Hwome be best,
Ay that it be ! I wer a straänger
At Marlden. Now as Jeän be dead,
Union they said wer plaäce for me.
They're cruel hard at Marlden, Mester.

2nd O. M. Ay, Mester, that be hard.

1st O. M. I wer a straänger
And furrin like down Marlden way.
"Mesters," says I, "I be agwine hwome."
Vor I wer barn at Chillingbourne,
At Chillingbourne acress the down.

2nd O. M. God give ee luck and bring ee safe,

For, Mester, you've a longish roäd
To travel. Won't ee wet yer throät
And eat a bit for company?

1st O. M. Well I wun't say
But I'll be glad o' summat, Mester.

2nd O. M. Us can sit down
Under the May-bush. He do smell
Sweeter nor spices, what were brought
To Solomon in all his glory.

Lord, it do seem
Like yesterday I heard un tell
In church o' myrrh and frankincense
And pomegranate, and kep on smelling
At hawthorn-flower stuck in my coät :
Yet I were a lad then.

1st O. M. Time he do pass.

2nd O. M. So smooth and slick as water runs
Under a bridge. There's many a while
I've leaned and watched un run as clear
Over saäme pebbles and the shaäde
O' bridge a-movin'.
'Twere hard to think it never wer
The saäme water, but allays passing
And changing. That be so's our years,
To my thinking.

1st O. M. Time do pass.
Be varty year come Lady Day
Sin' I were hwome at Chillingbourne.

2nd O. M. Whoy, Mester, fourty year
Be a longish time. Ye'll find a deal o' change.

1st O. M. There wun't be nowt a-chaänged at
Chillingbourne ;
Chillingbourne be a main loänsome plaäce.

When I were a chile
A scarin' birds from the veäld all the day,
Up o' the downland agen the road,

I mind the hours 'ud creep and go

That slow,

And niver nowt a-coming along the road ;
Unless maybe dust marchin' with the wind.

Nowt but a lark

Overhead to hear, or a scud o' plover
Passin' and cryin' loänsome like.

2nd O. M. Ben't ee afear'd to miss your way,
Wi noön to ask ?

1st O. M. Not I, Mester !

I mind the way, the straät road
To Chillingbourne across the down.

But ee doan't see nowt o' tree nor house
Till edge o' the hill ;

Then plump onto roof o' church tower
Seems ee med drop, and tops o' trees
Wi' rooks beneath ee cawin' and flittin'.
And ee see as plaän the length of the streat
And th' aäncient Cross

Under the elm, what Cromwell broke.

There bean't nowt a-chaänged yonder,
No chaänge, I warr'nt, at Chillingbourne.

2nd O. M. And ee've gotten your friends yet a-livin' ?

1st O. M. Gearge he be shepherd at Manor Varm,
There do he bide.

My darter Jeän, her's I've buried,
Wrote to un unst and he made answer.
How many years be that a-gone ?

Naäy, surely !

I cann't a-tell—but Brother Gearge,
Younger nor me by seven year,
Ain't a-got no call to die.

2nd O. M. Death do go withouten order
Up and down upon the earth.

1st O. M. I tell ee Gearge
Were a lusty chap ; and Vicar he knowed—

Why there ! The awld man be dead !
But new un, said Gearge, were a sight better.
He'll find I a job, he will for sure.

2nd O. M. It's like he will. I ha' gotten a job
Most times o' year.

1st O. M. It be work I want—
But I were a straänger Marlden waäy ;
Went there courtin' my wife as died
Aäteen year come September.

The las' day,
Mother were living, I mind her said :
“ Tom'll be sorry in time to come
He bided away and never did wed
Cousin Bessie.” She married well
Did Cousin Bess, and she ain't a-forgotten
Me for sure, if she be alive.

2nd O. M. There be as remembers, there be as forgets.

1st O. M. Well, I must be a-gettin' hwome !
I thankee, Mester, an' wish 'ee luck.
Aw dear ! I never thowt,
When sprack an' young I stepped awaäy,
How I'd come hwome !

I niver thowt I'd care to lay
My boäns at last where Mother's lie,
In churchyard, under th' aäncient tower.

2nd O. M. Good day to ee, Mester, an good luck !
I wish ee safe at journey's end
Afore't be dark.

1st O. M. At vall o' night
Curvew do ring to guide ee hwome
To Chillingbourne across the down.

*The Old Man on his journey passed alone,
That way his shadow led, straight down the road.*

*Below him lay
Earth in the gold and glory of the time,*

*Rejoicing Earth, decked with the light of waters.
But he beheld her not. Only beyond,
Lovely and dim, he saw the remembered hills.*

VI

THE BICYCLISTS' RETURN

Back to the workaday world, the old,
As errant mariners fleet,
With spices laden and secret gold,
Or lovers with thoughts more sweet.
Listen, listen and follow !

Back to the workaday world anew,
To the crowd and the toil away !
But our hearts have been dipped in the morning dew
And the light of the early day.
Listen, listen and follow !

DEDICATION TO "A VILLAGE
TRAGEDY"

A JEWELLED tale, an antique historie
Plucked out of darkness and the dust of kings,
Or windy song the Northern sea-maid flings
Among the mountains from the brooding sea ;
Such gifts my venturous Fancy promised thee
When to the sun he stretched his gauzy wings.
He promised thee, but other far he brings
As wingless now he wanders home to me.

Poor creeping Elf ! He gathers what he can—
Herbs that each rash disdainful foot may reach,
Yet once who wore them understood the speech
Of bird and beast and all the song of Pan.
One hidden tongue they still have power to teach—
The obscure cry of toiling, suffering Man.

OXFORD POEMS

GENIUS LOCI

PEACE, Shepherd, peace ! What boots it singing on ?

Since long ago grace-giving Phœbus died,
And all the train that loved the stream-bright side
Of the poetic mount with him are gone
Beyond the shores of Styx and Acheron,
In unexplorèd realms of night to hide.
The clouds that strew their shadows far and wide
Are all of Heaven that visits Helicon.

Yet here, where never muse or god did haunt,
Still may some nameless power of Nature stray,
Pleased with the reedy stream's continual chant
And purple pomp of these broad fields in May.
The shepherds meet him where he herds the kine,
And careless pass him by whose is the gift divine.

REST

TO spend the long warm days
Silent beside the silent-stealing streams,
To see, not gaze,
To hear, not listen, thoughts exchanged for dreams :

See clouds that slowly pass
Trailing their shadows o'er the far faint down,
And ripening grass,
While yet the meadows wear their starry crown.

To hear the breezes sigh
Cool in the silver leaves like falling rain,
Pause and go by,
Tired wanderers o'er the solitary plain :

See far from all affright
Shy river creatures play hour after hour,
And night by night
Low in the West the white moon's folding flower.

Thus lost to human things,
To blend at last with Nature and to hear
What song she sings
Low to herself when there is no one near.

TWILIGHT

COME, let us go,
For now the grey and silent eve is low,
The river reaches gleam,
And dimly blue in windings of the stream
Its heavy rushes bow.
The day is past, the world is dreaming now,
The world is dreaming now, let us too dream.

And dreaming be
The vision of our souls like this we see,
Where unsubstantial skies
Blend with the Earth's obscure realities.
Let us recall the blind
Forewandered years and round their temples bind
Fresh coronals of lovelier memories.

For dreaming here
We shall remember joys that never were,
That might and might not be ;
One rich remembrance with its alchemy
Transmuting all Time's store,
Till the sad years exult and deem they bore
Only the long, long love 'twixt thee and me.

OXFORD BELLS

PART I

I

THE watchers in the everlasting towers,
Blind watchers of bright heaven, the bells who own
No changing years, but the unchanging hours—

Listen ! They strike : a sinister monotone
Deep as all time. The same sound and who hears
Could be the same, did she not hear alone.

Those iron tongues have portioned out our years
Indifferently, with fateful rumours blown
About the solemn spires and aëry tiers

Of clustered pinnacles, and far unknown
Utterance that communes with the void. It fills
The valley broadening round their ancient throne,
Out to the edges of the violet hills.

II

From tower to tower eternally they call
O'er the grey windings of the storied town,
Its large lawns, set in many a time-rich wall

And cool with broad tree-shadows. Floating down,
Everywhere have I listened to that chime,
Heard it high-laden with the summer crown

Of the lone reaches, heard it when the rime
Broidered the fretted stone and flung light lace
Of silver on the boughs, when winter's prime

Over the frozen flood in whirling race
Swept out and scattered wide our joyous crew,
Like birds that beat some viewless bound of space

On wheeling wings ; till deep and deeper blue
Gathered on Oxford towers, and far away,
Ere up the stream in swinging line we flew,
Through the black trees burned out the crimson day.

III

Again that hour has struck, has dropped again
Into the gulf whence nothing may resurge,
Yet lo ! with hollow iteration vain,

Itself the phantom and the thaumaturge,
The old long dead inevitable hour
'Neath the emerging stars doth re-emerge.

Once heedlessly, as ignorant of their power
A wizard's child might hear such dooming spells
As make the dead leap up and brave men cower

Muttering hoarse prayers, so have I heard the bells.
Heard in the green hush of some long-drawn bower,
Walks where a legendary shade compels

Day to its hue, where slow, with mirrored tower,
Garden and bridge that waver as it goes,
Cherwell to Isis bears its meadowy dower,

Strewn hawthorn petals, shatterings of the rose,
Serene as it could know their garland bright
Year after year renews, and even as those,

Brings to the winding wave its joyous freight
Of eager youth to push adventurous prow
Far up its ancient ways with new delight,
And dream old dreams under its haunted boughs.

IV

The city of immortal youth is wreathing
Her grey walls with young garlands, mauve and amber
And white, blossoms from hidden gardens seething
Surprise her streets, round the open windows clamber

Blossoms, as though to list young laughter there ;
The very soul of her sweet stones is breathing
In a warm and subtle fragrance everywhere.

She with herself contends, as in old story
Fair goddesses contend which is most fair,
Whether this luminous and transitory

Loveliness of the Spring, this happy flood
Of unbound youth, clothe her with her great glory,
Or the still, golden centuries that brood,

A gorgeous mist, about her. Age on age
Of men that on this Oxford earth have stood
As we to-day, wrought us our heritage

Of beauty, made her a lamp among the nations,
Shrine of far thoughts and world-long pilgrimage.
We are roofed with their rich dreams, imaginations

Of theirs first visioned these triumphant towers,
Ere yet their hands builded, the inspirations
Of old immortal souls vibrate in ours.

To be made a son of hers is to be made
Scion of an illustrious line, ancient, that dowers
Its heirs with halls majestic, arrayed

In beauty beyond the pomp of palaces ;
The high tradition, the ancestral shade
Of noble minds to inherit, centuries'

Hoarded, unscheduled, nameless wealth at leisure
To have for heart's contentment—this it is
To be her son and hold in trust her treasure.

What coward hands are ours that hold this trust
Of hers to-day ! Blind hearts with a false measure
Weigh triumphingly some petty gain, some lust

For gilded gingerbread and the banal stare
Of modern streets against her beauty august—
This joy o' the world and unborn Time, this rare

Masterwork of a city. Men profane
Blast her essential beauty, unaware
Of what they strike at, smile and strike again.

But here where yet no horror flaunts, no scar
Defaces, pause, you who to this heart's fane,
Dreamed of, desired, come from the western star.

Here yet her perfect street's pure curve defies
Its violators. Here the vanished far
Dead centuries look into your living eyes.

Still is her street this morn of early May,
Slender and blond against the blue doth rise
Her lily tower, fronting the high noonday

Queen's, All Souls' shine, one vivid tree is lending
Its blot of glowing shadow, across the way
Loom darkly battlements, at the curve's ending

The memorable church uplifts her spire.
In the empty street what viewless crowds are blending!
What shades come forth ! Young Shelley to enquire

Of the soul's immortality ; from under
The same dark arch rolls in his sombre attire
Great Johnson's bulk, breathing a mellow thunder.

The madcap Prince runs by and does not mark
The sculptured souls he shall from bodies sunder
In piteous War, those lords and lieges stark

"Drenched with Death's bitter bowl," nor does he see
His fated crown, nor the proud-stalking dark
Remorseful ghost of mitred Chichele.

By Magdalen gate Boy Gibbon airs his frown
And sauntering from her Grove, slow passes he
Of the quiet smile. Scholars in scarlet gown

Mingle with frocked Friar and hooded Master,
And Hark ! from the narrow lanes of the packed town
Sweeps a wild crew, singing how Earth has cast her

Mantle of winter, thrumming viol-strings,
Shouting and dancing fast and ever faster,
Horns on their heads, with garlands of green Spring's

Burgeon enwound, they rush, drunken with youth,
On to St. Mary's. Then her tocsin sounds.
Gone is the happy riot of boy and blooth,

And locked in a fierce match there press and reel
Backwards and forwards, men from shop and booth
And tonsured gownsmen, blood spurts on the steel,

An arrow sings—a yell—a bitter groan—
'Tis gone ! Only God's silver trumpets peal
Pure from the great St. Mary's memoried stone.

Those voices die. Awaking from the dream,
So hushed the modern scene, so calm and lone
The street appears, this Oxford well may seem

A dead place, where alone a dead Past dwells.
Hush ! 'Tis an hour strikes o'er her sleeping stream,
Tower unto tower calls with a clang of bells.

Behold her stream is flowing, her stream of life,
From every arched gate it swiftly swells,
From narrow lanes that have echoed to the strife

And madcap mirth of men long passed away,
Till all the street with Spring and Youth is rife.
Hurrying or sauntering on they pass or stay

Their feet on time-worn steps, a jubilant crowd,
Electric with young radiant life, in play
Of body and brain eager and fresh and proud.

Grey quadrangles are echoing in the clear
Light to their voices, answering laughter loud
Rings from the open casements. Far and near

They are scattering to the river and the vernal
Wide meadows, and their hearts are high of cheer
As though Springtime and Youth were things eternal.

They have swift thoughts that sweep to every wind,
Conquerors of earth, seeking by paths supernal
Each old unconquered Sphinx, assured to find

At length the answer to her challenging.
The heart of the unborn Age beats in their mind,
The air of the rising tide with salt sting

Blows round these Oxford towers. She is not dead,
She is no corpse engarlanded with Spring,
Her ancient glory for pall above her spread,

She is alive perpetually, ay more,
She is forever young and on her head
The light of every dawn. The charm she bore

Is hers, her potent secret is the same
While yet her unwearied bells in solemn sooth
The golden spouses of her spirit proclaim,
The kiss of the crowned Past and spectred Youth.

v

Dawn and high day, wan visitings of light
Out of the haunting moon, come to the bells,
Heaven's horologe turns in their darkling sight.

Blind necromancers, from their hollow cells
Float forth the eyeless ghosts of all hours dead
With voices hidden as the sigh in shells.

The living hour leaps clangorous overhead
To living ears. A thin ethereal
Long sound pursues, the sweep of pinions spread,

Rushing they knew not whither, and the call
Of the oblivious ghosts, wild whispering
To dust of unremembered burial.

But I have heard them, since with folded wing
One wandered ghost her former pathway found,
One blind, blind ghost that knew not anything

Of change, but with her filmy hair enwound
Mine eyes, and closely murmuring, filled my sense
With the enchantment of that fading sound.

Ah, faded, gone ! Yet had its effluence
Brooded about my soul and learned me more,
Had not ill-friending chance scattered it hence,

Dispersing much that companied of yore
A spirit the world's business doth subdue
'To that it works in'. So that Hour forbore

To come again and whisper all she knew
Of those deep seas of Life through which our own
Fresh current flows.

The ancient hours renew

Their solemn solitary undertone ;
And I do hear them, yet as one who hears
A talk confused in a tongue half known,

With hints of roaring battle, hopes and fears
And festival and music and shrill play,
Of loves forgotten and forgotten tears,

And one grey murmur under arches grey—
The sigh of cloistral hours that fain would tell
Of how they stole and stole long lives away,
Issueless, void, alike, innumerable.

VI

I hear the incantation of the bells,
And since that Hour made me her neophyte,
I know what occult power within them dwells
To mock at Time's inviolable might.

A power to make invisible things seen,
And tumult calm and morning in dull night,
To set the day with stars, and like a screen

Rolled back, the curtain of a peopled stage,
Uplift the tenuous moment's painted scene
From life's loud pageant and mute pilgrimage.

VII

Wherefore in ways familiar I behold
Shapes that are not and voiceless greetings greet ;
And often when the sullen midnight tolled

Makes sound of hurrying footsteps in the street,
I hear not these but other footsteps fall,
In the hush night a sound of many feet.

Away ! Away ! Ah, whither pass they all,
Hastening into the dark so crowdedly
And scattering there, until the gradual

Silence resumes them ? Yet their echoes cry
'Away' ! From shrine and sculptured pinnacle
The crownless images make low reply.

"Away !" they murmur, "Lest our mantle chill
Fall on your lightsome limbs, our fillets bind
Your charmed brows, with subtle power to kill

The adventurous keen ardours of the mind
And tame the resolute will."

Forth are they driven

Reluctantly, they are strewn to every wind,

Under all stars that circle in wide heaven—
And still on every wind they will return,
Her sons to whom she who forgets has given

A charm whereby they must remembrance learn.
They will return to her through dark and day,
Ghosts of the living, steal out of the stern

Stress of the world, and come the viewless way,
Revisiting these haunts. A mingled flight
They hasten, whether from some secluded gray

Village mid English fields, or the fierce light
Of Indian suns, or Northern waste of snow.
I hear their silken wings brush through the night

Faintly, as round these sounding towers they flow.
The bells hold converse with them in the height,
Speak to the quiet slumberers below,

The steadfast stars and the processions white
Of wavering mist that through the valley go,
Till in the young dawn Oxford towers are bright.

PART II

To Rhoda Broughton, in memory of her sister, Ellinor Newcome.

I

The bells their loud unchanging task fulfil
Beating upon the ear and on the brain
With a remindful resonance, until

Half could I wish their oracles again
Silent for me, as once they were ; and yet
More than remembrance is it mortal pain

To watch that still, pursuing sea whose fret
Washes our footsteps out, and one by one,
O'er everything we were and would regret
Sweeps the smooth waters of oblivion.

II

So let their incantation still sound on !
Still shall new hours the old fair hours repeat,
Bringing them back who with the hours are gone.

There is a summer silence in the street,
Where half the shouldering gables catch the sun,
Their bloomy windows fragrant in the heat—

Surely 'tis but a little way to run
And cross your threshold, then a shadowy space,
Reach the gay garden and yourself and one

Standing amid her flowers. In many a place
Does this white moon of May find multitude
Of flowers more beautiful than her own face.

What long glades pale with hawthorn, what bedewed
Soft slopes o'erspangled with the cowslip sheen,
And nested primroses, a late lone brood !

Through nets of delicate shadow she hath seen
The sea-blue splendour of wild-hyacinths spread
Up Wytham woods, under the first fresh green ;

O'er foamy orchards her young light is shed
And flash of wilding blossom and the pride
Of country gardens, richly tapestried

With royal tulips, sumptuously dyed
Purple and gold and sanguine, striped and smeared,
Or pure in their keen colour as a bride

Is in her whiteness. Yet as oft, she peered
Over the black tower, smiling silverly,
In yonder strip of city earth appeared

As crowded wealth of flowers as she might see.
By ample lawns o'erflowed with ministrant air
Or hollow coverts none explore save she.

For once it had your blithe and debonnair
And 'lucky-fingered' lady, eve and morn
To visit every bloom with happy care.

She was a votary of that later born
Young Muse, whom not less holy than the Nine,
Some brown-haired Dryad bore to the unshorn

Bright god ; who now a hierophant divine,
Comes treading with fair feet invisible,
Choosing herself the priestess and the shrine.

Such was that clear-eyed lady, who knew well
Out of the earth's dark homes to call up store
Of heaven-bright beauty and a wafting smell

Sweeter than incense.

All the bells restore,
Even to the moontide shadow where we read
Those ardent leaves, plucked from a heart's live core—

Flower-heart, whose burning petals wide dispread,
With scarlet ruin did enrich the mould,
Where still they glow, though long the flower is dead.

III

Tranquil and far, with murmur manifold,
On Autumn eves the bells their power resume,
Lone in the quiet sunset's waning gold.

They conjure up a green embowered room,
Where through the open casement there would swing
A sound of bells into the fire-lit gloom.

Oft have they chid me there, late lingering,
Warm in its lady's gracious atmosphere,
While easily as flames or fountains spring,

That sparkling spirit of yours threw out its clear
Lightnings of mirth, and the swift talk would flit
Flashing its wings through laughter everywhere.

How small a boon I brought you for your wit !
Only perchance some woodbine wreath of song,
Or hedgerow tale, dark though you smiled on it.

And even as I musing passed along
That street, you laid her to her near repose.
There by the river oft shall roses throng—

Yet since I brought no garland such as blows
In dewy May for her that loved the May,
From other fields, where Herb Remembrance grows,

I bring the unsheaved harvest of the way ;
Its purple leaves some dimmer dews immerse,
I pluck, and on your living breast I lay
The coronal of this Autumnal verse.

CHILD POEMS

APRIL

O COME across the hillside ! The April month is here,

The lamb-time, the lark-time, the child-time of the year.

The wren sings on the sallow,

The lark above the fallow,

The birds sing everywhere,

With whistle and with holloa

The labourers follow

The shining share,

And sing upon the hillside in the seed-time of the year.

O come into the hollow, for Eastertide is here,

And pale below the hillside the budding palms appear.

The silver buds a-blowing

Their yellow bloom are showing

To woo the bee ;

The bee awhile yet drowzes,

But the drunken moth carouses

All night upon the tree,

And dreams there in the dawning of the Spring-time of the year.

O come into the woodland ! The primroses are here,

And down in the woodland beneath the grasses sere,

As in a wide dominion,

How many a pretty minion

Of Spring to-day,

Where warm the sunshine passes

'Thro' the forest of the grasses,

Awakes to play,
To sport there in the sun-time, the play-time of the year.

O come across the hillside, for now the Spring is here,
Come child with your laughter, your pretty April cheer !
Your fantasy possesses
The airy wildernesses,
The shrill lark's dower,
The forest and the blossom,
The earth and in her bosom
The mouse's bower ;
The sunlight and the starlight of the Spring-time of the
year.

O come into the wide world ! For you the Spring is
here,
The blue heaven is smiling, the young earth carols clear.
Come happy heart to wonder,
Come eager hands to plunder
The wide world's store,
The meadow's golden glory,
The shining towers of story
On Dreamland's shore,
To reign there all the song-time, the child-time of the
year.

THE EARTH ANGEL

(TO A CHILD.)

BELOVED spirit, whom the angels miss
While those heaven-wandering wings thou foldest
here,
Love musing on thee, Love whose shadow is fear,
Divines thee born of fairer worlds than this,

And fain ere long to re-assume their bliss.
Stay, wingèd soul ! For earth, this human sphere,
Claims thee her own, her light that storms swept clear,
Her Righteousness that Love, not Peace, shall kiss.

'Twas out of Time thou camest to be ours,
And dead men made thee in the darkling years,
Thy tenderness they bought for thee with tears,
Pity with pain that nothing could requite,
And all thy sweetness springs like later flow'rs
Thick on the field of some forgotten fight.

THE CHILD'S BIRTHDAY

WHEN berries redden on the thorn,
O that's the time my love was born !
When leaves are scarlet in the vale,
And all the feathered grasses pale,
When humming wheels thrash out the corn,
'Twas then my pretty love was born.

When hunters wind the merry horn
By woodland ways and acres shorn ;
In darkening days when nests are chill,
In silent days when birds are still—
Except the lark, who sings for scorn
Of wintry care—my love was born !

O wailing month with tresses torn !
O happy month no more forlorn !
For thee, tho' earth lie mute below,
In Heaven the trumpet winds shall blow,
The rose of eve, the star of morn,
Shall crown the month my love was born.

ON THE DEATH OF AN INFANT

ALAS ! the little child is dead.
O sorrow for the downy head
That used to keep his mother's arm
And bosom warm,
And now the chilling earth instead
Must hide, for he is dead !

Mourn, mothers, ye who know how sweet
They were, the blossom-coloured feet
That in our dusty pathways yet
No print had set,
So that the world will scarcely mark
Their little track into the dark.
Only for one the baby feet
Have left earth incomplete.

They coldly lie, but she before
The hearth will chafe them now no more,
Nor swing the boy to let him leap,
Who scarce could creep,
In dainty dance upon the floor :
For all his play-time's o'er.

Nor from that slumber where he lies
Shall he with blue half-wakened eyes,
Stir at her shadow o'er him thrown
Or rustling gown,
And dream a smile because her face
Flits through some visionary place.
She need no longer still her cries
Lest he uncloze his eyes.

When last she wept—how many years
Ago it seems !—he dried her tears
With wandering touches velvet-sleek
Upon her cheek.

Now on his fragile breast she bows
Her shaken mouth and heavy brows,
And holds him fast, while he nor fears
Nor wonders at her tears.

Ye mothers, let her not alone
Make on this little dust her moan,
Be near with looks of love and touch
Not over-much
Her quivering grief with words, but wend
With her to-day made more than friend
By ancient mysteries of Earth,
By solemn pangs of death and birth,
Made consecrate, apart, unknown
Save unto you alone.

How lightly borne the little bier,
With all its flowers ! And what is here,
That ye in long procession go,
Sombre and slow,
As who at famous obsequies
Mourn for a world bereaved ? The wise
Will ask in wonder and recall
Some larger grief, or prodigal
Rich waste of Nature ; year by year
Things born to disappear.

But here, within this narrow hearse
The mystery of the Universe
Doth house as kingly and secure,
As vast and sure
As in the marble or the lead

That hold the world-subduing dead.
Its bare inscription doth contain
More than philosophers explain,
Or mightier poets can rehearse,
 Making immortal verse.

And who is she with veiled head ?
She had a name, but now instead
Another. What she was before
 She is no more,
Nor what she shall be. In her mind
By ways unknown she seems to wind,
Some endless lapse of time to tread
 Slowly behind the dead.

Ay, this beyond her thought is true.
The seas have shaped their shores anew,
And stars in other courses roll
 About the pole,
Since first this mourning way she went.
In Babylon she made lament,
And hath her ancient sorrow hid
'Neath an Egyptian pyramid ;
Yet shall through countries waste and new
 The unchanging road pursue.

She mightier names and powers hath known.
For lilies on her pathway strown,
Out of the unsounded gulf of Heaven
 The stars were given.
The deep of Earth's divine desire
Surged round her feet in argent fire,
Its passionate rumour, soft, immense,
Rose up to her through frankincense ;
She took the moon and Hera's throne,
 And Aphrodite's zone.

Through warring chaos, primal gloom,
Promethean shape she seems to loom,
Kindling her hearth with holier flame.

Around it came

Man that was beast, and where it burned
A human fellowship he learned.
She first his shelter, she the nurse
Of all he is, for her the curse
Sprung where she made the desert bloom—
The chain, the Titan's doom.

Adorn with flowers the darkling gate
Where things majestic pass, with state
Religious and with mourning eyes

Your ministries

Perform, ye mothers. Tell aloud
How that the glorious and the proud
The world's deep wave a moment ride
Like foam, and fade upon its tide.
Tell them that Life alone is great,
And Love and mortal Fate.

LITTLE GILBERT TO LITTLE RACHEL DURING HER ILLNESS

RACHEL! tell me what you know,
Tell me where the shadows go;
For before I'm sent to sleep
I can watch them run and creep,
Rock and spring and fly and fall
On the ceiling and the wall—
Troops of shadows at their games
Dancing to the dancing flames.

Soon as I have done with sleep
All about I look and peep,
But the shadows steal away,
Hide themselves before the day.

Rachel ! you must know of it,
For they say you often sit
Wide awake through all the hours
As the bells do in the towers.
You must see the shadows hide,
Though there *is* so much beside
That you have to keep in sight,
Things of day and things of night—
Sheep and elephants in herds,
Woolly dogs and fluffy birds,
Jugs and mugs and Pretty Polls,
Dolls with caps and caps with dolls,
Little drawers with little handles,
Chairs and tables, stars and candles :
Then the angels four that keep
Watch when all the world's asleep,
Standing silent in their places
With bird-wings and mother-faces.

Things to watch on every side ;
But your eyes are very wide,
Every thing I'm sure they see
Though you will not answer me.
Tell me where the shadows go,
And I'll tell you what I know—

Tell you what my garden grows,
There they stand and nod in rows—
Creatures, call them what you please,
Perhaps they're flowers, perhaps they're trees.
If you saw them in their places

With their great round yellow faces,
Nodding, bowing solemnly,
Staring so at you and me,
Though you'd meant to cry before,
You would have to laugh I'm sure.

You are smiling, looking wise,
Listening, listening with your eyes ;
You will tell me where they go,
And I'll tell you what I know—
What the lambs say to their mother
And the birds to one another,
In the pear-tree as they fly.
I will dance and by-and-by
Sing to you, and after this
Give you all I have—a kiss.

THE CHILD ALONE

'TIS a pleasant thing to be free.
Nobody knows, nobody guesses
What I am doing, where I am staying.
"Where is Marjorie?" mother is saying.
Julie, who loves to sit making her dresses,
Says, "She is playing
Under the tree."

No—through the jungle Marjorie passes.
Sometimes I run, sometimes I stand
Still in a covert of high-waving grasses,
Over my head.
Wilderness ways, uninhabited land,
Lone I explore.

Hares in the grass, mice where I tread,
Look up and wonder ;
Or the squirrel flashes
Red as he dashes
Over the leafy forest floor.
Then in the tree
High sits he
And mocks me under ;
While all of them, all of them wonder, wonder
What I can be.

I was a child, a little child,
I am a happy creature wild.
I used to have to run or walk
As I was bid, be still or talk ;
To shun the wind or sun or show'r,
And then come in at such an hour.
I was a child, a little child,
I am a happy creature wild.

For see I wander like a deer
That sniffs about the furrowed bole
Of some great tree, or starts in fear
From every leaf that trembles near ;
Or neighing like a frolic foal
That prances in a field at play,
I gallop farther on my way.
Sometimes a beech-mast tumbles thro',
I strip it daintily to find
The nut within its wooden rind,
And nibbling sit as squirrels do.
I was a child, a little child,
I am a happy creature wild.

Now, now again,
Reversing the spell,

Turning this plain
Little ring on my finger,
See I regain
Form of a child, spirit as well.
Yet I am free, no one can tell
Margie to haste, come and not linger.
Turn it again, thrice must it turn,
Thrice the sunlight flicker and burn
Deep in the heart of its single gem—
And see I ride from Jerusalem.

I am a knight ; the paynim horde
Have felt the weight of this good sword
About the Sepulchre of Our Lord.

'Tis a sinister woodland deep and wide,
Alone I ride.
Saint Hubert scatter the demon breed !
Mary Mother be my guide !
Up the glade at rushing speed,
What comes shining, what comes sweeping ?
'Tis a band of mailed men
And a lady passing fair,
Whom they carry to their den
Gleaming in her golden hair.
Ha ! I come, like lightning leaping,
Thrust and hew mid caitiff clamour.
Beat the stubborn thorn-bush down !
Cleave and rend the bracken's crown !
Not a stalk be left upright !
Now they know the paynim's hammer,
Now they know King Richard's knight.

Turn, turn again,
Magical ring.
I am a Dane,

Cunning and brave,
A pirate king.
Swiftly I come over the wave.

The shore, the Saxon town I see.
The smoke hangs blue on roof and tree
At evening over the little town.
I hear the bells in the grey church tow'r.
With fire and sword at midnight hour
I mean to harry and burn it down.
But fierce as a wolf, as a raven wise,
I come at first in a deep disguise
To the little town.
And when I climb to the nursery yonder
They'll call me Marjorie, and wonder
Why I should want to run away
And be as any rabbit wild ;
For I shall seem to be a child
Named Marjorie. What would they say
If they could know it was instead
A pirate that they put to bed ?

"BESIDE THE DOOR"

BESIDE the door there stands a fountain,
And he who looks therein
Sees his own face, that wont to smile so freshly,
Look forth all changed and wan.

The lilac bushes and the gay laburnum
Were once a spreading forest high o'erhead,
And when in the white dew I marked my footsteps,

I said : " They are alone.
No other wanderer ever came this way."

Beside the door there stands a fountain,
And he who leans above
And speaks to it, hears his own voice make answer
Hollow and strange and sad.

In yonder field was wont to bloom a thorn-tree,
A tree with scarlet flowers ;
And there a cuckoo cried as now he cries not,
Greeting the sun, greeting the moon,
When she rose red behind the frail abeles.

Beside the door there stands a fountain,
Thou, child, shalt see it not,
And though thou speak the fountain will not answer,
With hollow tone and sad.

And vainly have I sought to find the forest,
And find the scarlet tree ;
But thou shalt find them. Go, and then return,
Return and tell how all the unfooted pathways
Are white with dew, and deeper in the forest
Dwells the enchanted bird.

Beside the door there stands a fountain,
And he who looks therein
Sees his own face, that wont to smile so freshly,
Look forth all changed and wan.

BALLADS AND LYRICS

TO THE FORGOTTEN DEAD

To the forgotten dead,
Come, let us drink in silence ere we part.
To every fervent yet resolved heart
That brought its tameless passion and its tears,
Renunciation and laborious years,
To lay the deep foundations of our race,
To rear its mighty ramparts overhead
And light its pinnacles with golden grace.
To the unhonoured dead.

To the forgotten dead,
Whose dauntless hands were stretched to grasp the
rein
Of Fate and hurl into the void again
Her thunder-hoofed horses, rushing blind
Earthward along the courses of the wind.
Among the stars along the wind in vain
Their souls were scattered and their blood was
shed,
And nothing, nothing of them doth remain.
To the thrice-perished dead.

YOUNG WINDEBANK

THEY shot young Windebank just here,
By Merton, where the sun
Strikes on the wall. 'Twas in a year
Of blood the deed was done.

At morning from the meadows dim
He watched them dig his grave.
Was this in truth the end for him,
The well-beloved and brave ?

He marched with soldier scarf and sword,
Set free to die that day,
And free to speak once more the word
That marshalled men obey.

But silent on the silent band
That faced him stern as death,
He looked and on the summer land
And on the grave beneath.

Then with a sudden smile and proud
He waved his plume and cried,
"The king ! the king !" and laughed aloud,
"The king ! the king !" and died.

Let none affirm he vainly fell,
And paid the barren cost
Of having loved and served too well
A poor cause and a lost.

He in the soul's eternal cause
Went forth as martyrs must—
The kings who make the spirit laws
And rule us from the dust.

Whose wills unshaken by the breath
Of adverse Fate endure,
To give us honour strong as death
And loyal love as sure.

THE BALLAD
OF KING HJÖRWARD'S DEATH

THE Norns decreed in their high home,
 "Hjörward the King must die to-day."
A mighty man, but old and grey
With housing long on the grey foam,
And driving on their perilous way
His hungry dragon-herd to seek
Their fiery pasture, and to wreak
On Southern shrines with flame and sword
The wrath of Asgard's dreadful lord.

Seven days King Hjörward then had kept
His place in silence on his throne,
Seven nights had left him there alone,
Watching while all the palace slept,
Wan in the dawn and still as stone.
But when they said, "The King must die,"
A shout such as in days gone by
Shook the good ship when swords were swung,
Broke from his heart and forth he sprung.

"Sword, sword and shield!" he cried, "and thou
Haste, let the winged ship fly free.
Yonder there shivers the pale sea,
Impatient for the plunging prow,
I hear the shrill wind call to me—
Hark, how it hastens from the east!
'Why tarriest thou?' it cries, 'the feast
To-night in Odin's hall is spread,
They wait thee there, the armed dead.'

"They wait me there ! Ho, sword and shield !
What hero-faces throng the gate !
Not long nor vainly shall ye wait.
I too have not been weak to wield
The heavy brand, I too am great,
Hjörward am I. No funeral car
Slow rolling, but a ship of war
Swift on the wind and racing wave,
Bears me to feast among the brave.

"Slaves, women, shall not sail with me,
Nor brodered stuffs, nor hoarded gold,
But men, my liegemen from of old,
Strong men to ride the unbroken sea,
And arms such as befit the bold.
Come forth, my steed, thou fierce and fleet,
Once more thy flying hoofs shall beat
The level way along the strand,
The hard bright sea-forsaken sand."

So the horse Halfi came, and rose
The hounds that wont to hunt with him,
Shaggy of hide and lithe of limb.
And we too followed where repose
The dragon-ships in order grim,
Hastening together to let slip
Svior, the dark shield-girdled ship,
That like a live thing from the steep
Fled eagerly into the deep.

Fly fast to-day, proud ship, fly fast,
Scatter the surge and drink the spray ;
Hjörward is at thy helm to-day
For the last time, and for the last
Last time thou treadst the windy way.
The oarsmen to the chiming oar

Chant their hoarse song, and on the shore
The folk are silent watching thee
Speeding across the wide cold sea.

The wind that rose with day's decline
Rent the dim curtain of the west ;
Clear o'er the water's furthest crest
We saw a sudden splendour shine,
A flying flame that smote the breast
And high head of the mailed King,
His hoary beard and glittering
Great brand in famous fights renowned,
And those grim chiefs that girt him round.

"The gate," he muttered, "lo ! the gate !"
Staring upon the sky's far gold.
Yea, the wild clouds about it rolled
Showed like the throned and awful state
Of gods whose feet the waves enfold,
Whose brows the voyaging tempests smite,
Who wait, assembled at the bright
Valhalla doors, the sail that brings
This last and mightiest of kings.

As swift before the wind we drave,
We surely heard from far within
Their shining battlements the din
Of that proud sword-play of the brave ;
And Hjörward cried, "The games begin,
The clang of shield on shield I hear.
Wait, sons of Odin, wait your peer !"
Then as that sudden splendour fled,
With one great shout the King fell dead.

Lo as some falcon struck in flight
Reels from her course, and dizzily

Beats with loose pinions down the sky,
So Svior reeled 'twixt height and height
Of mounting waves, and heavily
Plunged in the black trough of the sea ;
And o'er her helmless, full of glee,
The roaring waters leapt and fell,
Sweeping swift souls of men to Hell.

We seized the helm and lowered the mast,
And shorewards steered thro' night and wind ;
We seemed like loiterers left behind
By some bright pageant that had passed
Within and left to us the blind
Shut gates and twilight ways forlorn.
And coldly rose the strange new morn,
Ere to the watchers on the shore
We cried, " The King returns no more."

Return, ah ! once again return !
Cross the frail bridge at close of day,
And pale along the crimson way
Of sunset when the first stars burn,
Ride forth, thou king-born—look and say
If on the wide earth stretched beneath
Thou seest any house of death,
High sepulchre where monarchs be,
Like thine up-built beside the sea.

Far have I journeyed from the moan
Of Northern waters, wandering
By tombs of many a famous king,
Where swathed in shrouds and sealed in stone
They slumber, and the tapers fling
A dimness o'er them, and the drone
Of praying priests they hear alone ;

Shut out from earth and bounteous sky,
And all the royal life gone by.

But Hjörward, clothed in shining mail,
Holds kingly state even where he died,
At Svior's helm. On either side
The hoary chiefs who loved to sail
In youth with him sit full of pride,
Leaned on their arms and painted shields,
Dim from a thousand battle-fields,
Looking upon the King, and he
Turns his helmed brows towards the sea.

Across his knees his naked brand
Is laid, and underneath his feet
The Goth horse Halfi, and the fleet
Great hounds he loved beneath his hand,
And when the storms arise there beat
Salt surges up against his grave.
He surely sometimes feels the brave
Ship Svior quiver in her sleep,
Dreaming she treads the windy deep,

There overhead year after year
The moorland turf and thyme shall grow,
Above the horizon faint and low
The same wild mountain summits peer ;
The same grey gleamy sea shall sow
With foam the level leagues of sand,
And peace be with that warrior band,
Till dim below the bright abodes
Gather the twilight of the gods.

THE WIZARD

SOMEWHERE, nobody knows,
Yet I think it must be
In the buried country under the sea,
The sunken town where nobody goes
Save the men who are drowned—
Their bones are drifting about the street
And knock at the doors with a rustling sound—
There must he dwell,
The Wizard who grudges men their bliss.
His house is Hell,
And he sits there staring into the street.

Red and white and black and grey
Familiars drift like moths his way—
Eddying float on filmy wings,
Or cling to the walls of the Wizard's cell.
They swarm and rise, transparent things,
As, whispering one by one, they tell
How men above do that and this.

Of earth's good joy when the Wizard hears,
The shining towers and fields of corn,
He is silent, staring into the street ;
And when they tell of the children born,
The merry souls, and how life is sweet,
He would weep for rage, but he has no tears.

The Wizard speaks :

“Spirits, black and red and gray”
—Under the sea his voice is dim—
“Have you seen a traveller bound this way ?
The bones are tired in the streets of the town.”

Whisperingly they answer him :

“ Yea, master, yea ;

A ruddy man, that hath much gold.”

“ What doth he do ? ”

“ By the fire he sits,

Merrily warming his five wits.”

“ Cold, cold, a-cold

Shall they be when he cometh down.

Fal la ! la la la ! ”

The Wizard speaks again :

“ White brothers and gray,

Must the merry man be alone in the town ? ”

“ Nay, master, nay ;

Young is the maiden who journeyeth down.”

“ What now doth she do ? ”

“ For her hair she is weaving a bridal crown,

For her wear she is choosing a bridal gown,

Counting the hours to her wedding-day.”

“ Let them be few !

The sea-foam shall wreath her hair,

Seaweed her body shall wear ;

I will make her wedding-bed,

Here, with the bones of the long dead.

Fal la ! la la la ! ”

The Wizard speaks yet again :

“ Red Mallikin, say,

Must I have only two ?

The bones are white in the streets of the town.”

“ Nay, master, nay ;

Over the sea there sail threescore.”

“ What now do they do ? ”

“ The ship slides on in a dazzle of blue,

The sailors are yarning the mast before ;

On the white deck the children play,
And passengers there walk up and down,
Or singing and dancing pass the day."
 "Merry be the company !
 Little know they
How the mad waves shall their partners be !
I shall watch them dance to the sunken town.
 Fal la ! la la la !"

Somewhere, nobody knows,
In the sunken town where nobody goes
Save the men who are drowned,
The Wizard sits and his sides he shakes,
Alone to himself good blood he makes :
 And the bones drift by with a rustling sound.

THE BALLAD OF THE SEA-BORN MAN

I HAVE wandered too far from the foam on the shore,
 from the sand and the gray-blowing grass,
Since I came from the dim of the deep ocean land
 through the clear-shining country to pass.
I whistled and sang because never before
A Sea Man had come from the sea,
And I laughed to the children who played at the door,
Till the children came laughing at me.
 "O see the Gaberlunzie man !
 The silly, crazy outland man !"
And after me, all after me the village people ran.

Of the soft woven weed was my mantle of grey, and a
 garland of pearls in my hair ;

Through the beautiful city that shines to the sea methought
like a prince I should fare.

O the gay market-booths in the square on the hill !

O the banner that blows o'er the gate !

But the people were sure that I meant them some ill

And whispered with faces of hate,

"Come, catch and kill the stranger man,

The ugly, evil outland man."

And fast as foam along the sea, across the fields I ran.

Through the waves of the meadow I followed the wind,
and watched all alone in my mirth,

How the little warm creatures, the brown and the gray,
did caper for joy of the earth.

And the songs in the sky were a merry mad crowd,

Running races of shrill and of sweet ;

I thought they were spirits that sang in a cloud,

Till a lark fluttered down at my feet.

And O the liquid utterings,

Dainty flights and flutterings

Here and there of hedgerow birds with pretty painted
wings.

Where the forest is dim like the green water world and the
gossamers float in the dew,

I went till I heard how a multitude sang, and fain had I
sung with them too.

There was surging of sound from a palace of spires,

A throng in its cavernous gate,

It was piercèd with rubies and walled with sapphires,

And carven with kings in their state.

"Oh fair," I said, "to see and hear !

What though they kill me, I'll come near,

'Twere shame on thee, thou sea-born man, a bitter shame
to fear."

So I strode from the forest, and shook my long hair, as I
 stood like a rock on the turf,
And sang the great song that the sea-heroes sing when they
 clash in the roar of the surf.

 There was shadow behind me and silence before,
 And then came a terrible cry,
And far o'er the meadows and in at the door
 I saw the pale multitude fly.
 The mighty gates with hollow sound,
 Shut after them, and round and round
Their palace fair I walked and cried and never entrance
 found.

At evening I heard the slow sigh of the wood, and thought
 it a voice that I knew.

I said, "I will break through the rampart of green and
 suddenly burst on the blue."

 O the frank open spaces, the sea and the sky,
 Where the winds spread their wings and are free !
But the shadows grow darker, the twilight goes by,
 While I wander and look for the sea.
 Among the thickets of the thorn
 I lay my body cold and torn,
And on the bough a sea-born wind doth rock itself and
 mourn.

Thou wind that art talking alone in the wood the speech
 of the wave on the shore,

Go tell to my love I am drowned in the wood and never
 shall come to her more.

Go tell to my mother who watches alone,

 Ah, not how I wandered and died !

But say that afar on a porphyry throne

 I sit with a queen at my side ;

 Go say to her who'll watch in vain,

 Though never may I come again,

Yet happily, most happily, beyond the hills I reign.

"THE MARINERS SLEEP BY THE SEA"

THE mariners sleep by the sea.

The wild wind comes up from the sea,
It wails round the tower, and it blows through the grasses,
It scatters the sand o'er the graves where it passes,
And the sound and the scent of the sea.

The white waves beat up from the shore,
They beat on the church by the shore,
They rush round the grave-stones aslant to the leeward,
And the wall and the mariners' graves lying seaward,
That are banked with the stones from the shore.

For the huge sea comes up in the storm,
Like a beast from the lair of the storm,
To claim with its ravenous leap and to mingle
The mariners' bones with the surf and the shingle
That it rolls round the shore in the storm.

There is nothing beyond but the sky,
But the sea and the slow-moving sky,
Where a cloud from the grey lifts the gleam of its edges,
Where the foam flashes white from the shouldering ridges,
As they crowd on the uttermost sky.

The mariners sleep by the sea.
Far away there's a shrine by the sea ;
The pale women climb up the path to it slowly,
To pray to Our Lady of Storms ere they wholly
Despair of their men from the sea.

The children at play on the sand,
Where once, from the shell-broidered sand,

They would watch for the sails coming in from far places,
Are forgetting the ships and forgetting the faces
Lying here, lying hid in the sand.

When at night there's a seething of surf,
The grandames look out o'er the surf,
They reckon their dead and their long years of sadness,
And they shake their lean fists at the sea and its madness,
And curse the white fangs of the surf.

But the mariners sleep by the sea.
They hear not the sound of the sea,
Nor the hum from the church where the psalm is uplifted,
Nor the crying of birds that above them are drifted.
The mariners sleep by the sea.

THE CHANGELING

WHEN did the Changeling enter in ?
How did the Devil set him a gin
Where the little soul lay like a rabbit,
Faint and still for a fiend to grab it ?
I know not.

Where was the fount of our dishonour ?
Was it a father's buried sin ?
Brought his mother a curse upon her ?
I trow not.

So pretty,
Body and soul, the child began.
He carolled and kissed and laughed and ran,

A glad creature of Earth and Heaven,
And the knowledge of love and the secret of pity,
That need our learning,
God to him at his birth had given.

One remembers
Trifles indeed—the backward-turning
Way he would smile from the field at play.
Sometimes the Thing that sits by the embers
Smiles at me—devil!—the selfsame way.
If only early enough one had guessed,
Known, suspected, watched him at rest,
Noted the Master's sign and fashion,
And unfooled by the heart's compassion,
Undeterred by form and feature,

Caught the creature,
Tried by the test of water and fire,
Pierced and pinioned with silver wire,
Circled with signs that could control,
Battered with spells that tame and torture
The demon nature,
Till he writhed in his shape, a fiend confest,
And vanished—
Then had come back the poor soul banished,
Then had come back the little soul.

But now there is nothing to do or to say.
Will no one grip him and tear him away,
The Thing of Blood that gnaws at my breast?

Perhaps he called me and I was dumb.
Unconcerned I sat and heard

Little things,
Ivy tendrils, a bird's wings,
A frightened bird—
Or faint hands at the window-pane?

And now he will never come again,
The little soul. He is quite lost.

I have summoned him back with incantations
Of heart-deep sobs and whispering cries
Of anguished love and travail of prayer.
Nothing has answered my despair

But long sighs
Of pitiful wind in the fir-plantations.
Poor little soul ! He cannot come.

Perchance on a night when trees were tost
The Changeling rode with his cavalcade
Among the clouds, that were tossing too,
And made the little soul afraid.
They hunted him madly, the howling crew,
Into the Limbo of the lost,
Into the Limbo of the others
Who wander crying and calling their mothers.

Now I know
The creatures that come to harry and raid,
How they ride in the airy regions,
Dance their rounds on meadow and moor,
Gallop under the earth in legions,
Hunt and holloa and run their races
Over tombs in burial-places.

In the common roads where people go,
Masked and mingled with human traces,
I have marked, I who know,
In the common dust a devil's spoor.

To somebody's gate
A Thing is footing it, cares not much
Whether he creep through an Emperor's portal

And steal the fate
Of a Prince, or into a poor man's hutch—
For the grief will be everywhere as great
And he'll everywhere spread the smirch of sin—
So long as a taste of our blood he may win,
So long as he may become a mortal.

I beseech you,
Prince and poor man, to watch the gate.
The heart is poisoned where he has fed,
The house is ruined that lets him in.
Yet I know I shall never teach you.
With the voice of the dear and the eyes of the dead
He will come to the door and you'll let him in.

If I could forget
Only that ever I had a child,
If only upon some mirk midnight,
When he stands at the door, all wet and wild,
With his owl's feather and dripping hair,
I could lie warm and not care,
I should rid myself of this Changeling yet.

I carried my woe to the Wise Man yonder.
"You sell forgetfulness, they say.

How much to pay
To forget a son who is my sorrow?"

The Wise Man began to ponder.
"Charms have I, many a one,
To make a woman forget her lover,
A man his wife or a fortune fled,
To make the day forget the morrow,
The doer forget the deed he has done,
But a mighty spell must I borrow
To make a woman forget her son.

For this I will take a royal fee.
Your house," said he,
"The storied hangings richly cover,
On your banquet table there were six
Golden branched candlesticks,
And of noble dishes you had a score.
The crown you wore
I remember, the sparkling crown.
All of these,
Madam, you shall pay me down.
Also the day I give you ease
Of golden guineas you pay a hundred."

Laughing I left the Wise Man's door.
Has he found such things where a Changeling sits ?
The home is darkened from roof to floor,
The house is naked and ravaged and plundered
Where a Changeling sits
On the hearthstone, warming his shivering fits.

He sits at his ease, for he knows well
He can keep his post.
He has left me nothing to pay the cost
Of snatching my heart from his private Hell.

Yet when all is done and told,
I am glad the Wise Man in the city
Had no pity
For me, and for him I had no gold.

Because if I did not remember him,
My little child—Ah ! what should we have,
He and I ? Not even a grave
With a name of his own by the river's brim.

Because if among the poppies gay
On the hill-side, now my eyes are dim,
I could not fancy a child at play,
And if I should pass by the pool in the quarry
And never see him, a darling ghost,
Sailing a boat there, I should be sorry—
If in the firelit, lone December
I never heard him come scampering post
Haste down the stair—if the soul that is lost
Came back, and I did not remember.

THE BALLAD OF KING RAMESES

From the ancient Poem of Pentaur, the Egyptian scribe.

KING RAMESES marched to the Northward, to the
borders of Kadesh he came,
He marched like his father Mentu for Orontes that waters
the same
With the troop that has "Victory Bringer" and the name
of the King for its name.
But ere he was come to the city the Vile One of Khita
arose,
From the shores of the sea unto Khita he summoned King
Rameses' foes,
They gathered as grasshoppers gather, like locusts assembled
they lay
And covered the mountains and valleys, and no man was
left by the way.
There led them the lord of the Khita and bore with him
treasures untold,
He emptied the realm of its treasure, he stript it of silver
and gold.

Like sand were the men and the horses, he had gathered
them all to the war !

The well-armed champions of Khita stood three upon every
car.

Countless they crouched in their ambush, they were hidden
west of the town.

They rushed on the troop of the sun-god, and horse and
foot went down.

Yea, unawares they had smitten the host of the King and
possessed

Kadesh that lies by Orontes, on the bank of the stream to
the West.

King Rameses heard and he armed him, like Mentu he
rose in his pow'r,

He seized his arms for the battle, he clutched them like
Bar in his hour,

And swift from their stalls in the vanguard, from the stable
of Rameses came

His steeds that were mighty to bear him—"Victory in
Thebes" was their name.

Fast, fast in his fury he drave them, he brake through the
ranks of the foe,

The King he alone and none other, then he turned to
behold them, and lo !

The chariots of Khita by thousands had compassed him
round and there lay

The hosts of the Vile One of Khita as a bar in King
Rameses' way ;

The tribes of the sea and the mountain, the numberless
nations from far,

And the bravest champions of Khita stood three upon every
car.

"Was there one of my chariots with me ? Of my captains
and lords was there one ?

Nay, but they fled from the battle, and Pharaoh remained there alone."

Then Rameses cried unto Ammon : " Deniest thou, father, thy son ?

Wherein have I sinned against Ammon, what deed without him have I done ?

Are the monuments vain I have made thee ? For nought was the sacrifice slain ?

The thousands of bulls for thine altars and captives in throngs for thy fane,

And lands hast thou counted as nothing ? and treasures as utterly vain ?

All odorous woods I have brought thee, the incense was sweet in my hand.

I finished thy courts, and thy gateways of stone overshadow the land,

With masts I adorned thee the portals, 'tis I who have brought unto thee

The obelisks hewn at Syene, and galleys that bear o'er the sea

The wealth of the world to thine altars, the hand of King Rameses steers—

I have given thee stone everlasting, a house for a million of years.

Such gifts were they given aforetime ? Of old hast thou witnessed the same ?

On him who rejecteth thy counsels, on him be confusion and shame,

But I who have honoured thee, Ammon, my father I call on thy name.

The multitudes gather against me, I stand amid nations unknown,

I stand here alone with no other, they are many and I am alone.

My chariots and horsemen have left me, they heeded me not when I cried,

But better than millions of horsemen, ay better than sons
at my side,
And more than a thousand of brothers though marshalled
about me they fought,
Is Ammon who maketh the labour of multitudes even as
nought.
Behold it is thou that hast done it, I blame not thy
counsels, I cry
To the ends of the earth, I invoke thee ! ”

The house of Hermonthis on high
Re-echoed the voice of my crying, he heard and he came
like the wind,
I shouted for joy at his coming, as hastening he called from
behind ;
“ It is I, it is Ammon thy father, I am eager to help thee,
my son,
The lord and the lover of heroes, I am Ra the victorious one.
My heart has rejoiced in thy valour, I stretch forth my
hand to the fray,
And better than millions of horsemen shall Ammon befriend
thee to-day.”
He spake and the word was accomplished. Like Mentu I
shoot to the right,
I grasp to the left in my fury, I break them as Bar in his
might.
Two thousand five hundred the chariots, I see them, they
shall not withstand,
I am there in the midst with my horses, I trample them as it
were sand.
They found not their hands for the battle, amazement
befell them and fear,
They slackened the bowstring before me, they knew not to
handle the spear ;
Yea, one on another I hurled them and headlong they fell
in the flood,

As crocodiles fall in the river so fell they, I drank of their blood.

King Rameses said, "'Tis my pleasure that none shall return from the fight,
Not one shall arise of the fallen, nor any look back unto flight."
And there was the Vile One of Khita, he stood 'mid his legions to see ;
Beholding the valour of Pharaoh he trembled, he turned him to flee.
The King was alone. Then he mustered his bravest and sent them to slay
King Rameses, numberless horsemen assembled in battle array.

I say to my hand, "Thou shalt taste them," and, lo, in a moment of space
I spring like a flame to devour them—they perish each one in his place.
I hear through the wind of my rushing how one of them cries to the other,
"Not a man, not a man is against us, beware of the god, O my brother !
The mighty have seen him and straightway their arrows have dropped from the bow,
They lift not a hand when he cometh, his countenance layeth them low.
Like Ra in the front of the morning his quiver is laden with flame,
'Tis Sechet consumes us before him, 'tis Bar that possesses his frame."

Like a griffin the King has pursued them, they come to the meeting of ways.

They flee but they cannot escape him, he calls to his
men as he slays,

“Ho, courage my horsemen and footmen! Look back
for a little and see

How I conquer alone with no other but Ammon that
fighteth for me.”

My charioteer, even Menna, was with me and he was afraid,
In the press of the chariots he trembled, his spirit was
greatly dismayed.

“O Prince and protector of Egypt! O gracious and
mighty!” he saith,

“Thou fightest alone against many, how now canst thou
save us our breath?

King Rameses, gracious and mighty, we cannot escape
from our death.”

But Rameses cried to him, “Courage, ho, courage, my
charioteer!

Behold, as a hawk I will pierce them and rend them.
Why then shouldst thou fear?

And what to thy heart are these herdsmen, since Ra will
not brighten his face,

On millions of such? The ungodly! He loveth to humble
their race.”

King Rameses rushed on the vanguard, he brake through
the ranks of the foe,

Six times he has sundered and broken the ranks of the
Khita and low

He has laid them, the caitiffs of Khita, they trembled
before him and quailed,

They fled but they could not escape him, like Bar in his
hour he prevailed.

And now when my horsemen and footmen beheld me
they worshipped afar,

They praised me as Mentu the mighty, the sword un-
resisted of Ra;

For the god, yea, the god, was beside me, 'twas he who
had brought it to pass
That nations were scattered before me and were to my
horses as grass.
They marched from the camp in the evening, they came in
their wonder and stood
Where I brake through the tribes and the mighty of Khita
lay whelmed in their blood,
The sons of the chief and the kinsfolk—and morning
arose on the plain,
It lighted the field, and in Kadesh was nowhere to tread
for the slain.

A SONG OF HOME-COMING

DARK and cold on the far battle-field
My comrades' blood is lying.

Cover their grave with the laurel sheen,

O let the laurel grow there !

Dark and cold is the blood that was shed,

But the blood in my heart is warm and red,

To the rapid drum it oft replies,

And swiftly must it flow there.

Dawn and dark on the far battle-field

Shall find their grave left lonely ;

But rivers wide around it sweep

And ever gently fold them.

For the shining rivers that round them sweep

Are flowing salt and warm and deep,

Unbeheld of human eyes—

O eyes of God behold them !

Sound is their sleep on the lone battle-field
Who have finished their work and are weary,
And sighing ghosts on shroudy wings
That grieve there do not grieve them.
Mourning ghosts that have wandered far
Where a blind wind blows under many a star,
Spirits of pain whose peace is o'er—
O peace of God receive them !

Comrades we sailed for the far battle-field,
We stood on the ship together,
To the mighty voice of a people's pride
A prouder voice returning ;
And brave eyes smiled on us, dim with pain,
Where the long quay roared in a blur of rain.
Sombre ships return no more,
To bring the brave eyes mourning !

My comrades lie on the lone battle-field,
And the racing ships run homeward.
Cover their grave with the laurel sheen !
But the banners are dancing o'er us.
The banners are dancing my heart above,
They are talking together of joy and love.
O life that is snatched out of death is sweet,
And good the years before us !

Wait us awhile on the far battle-field,
Till the phantom years have faded,
All, all forgotten, the sweet time and sad,
Homeward to you we shall wander.
Far away our dust may lie,
Under the stone or under the sky,
But one by one we shall muster and meet
In the camp of our memory yonder.

Life and Death from the lone battle-field
As a vapour at morn shall be lifted,
All be forgot save the due that we paid
And the day that our country remembers.
In the hour of her need, for the battle of doom
She will summon her dead, we shall rise from the
tomb,
Our banners shall beacon her sons and the flame,
Of her watch-fires be lit from our embers.

Late or soon on a wide battle-field
We comrades all shall be lying.
Cover our graves with the laurel sheen,
O let the laurel grow there !

THE LOST COMRADES

WHEN we are dancing in the former places,
Lightly and rosily dancing as before,
Though I am young, I see too many faces—
Young, young faces that will come no more.
Black and white feet twirling,
Pretty skirts a-whirling,
A strong arm sweeping you along the polished floor.
Come the merry hours like the merrier hours before,
But haunted now for ever by the young, young, faces.

Merry were our comrades, boys and girls of Maytime,
Leaping, laughing, the youth in us like wine,
We were sporting with the lads or watching them at
playtime,
And waltzing all the night into clear sunshine.
Now for dawn we've noon here,
Maytime's changed for June here.

Our feet are as fleet, we are fairer and as fine,
But the young, young comrades, the merry comrades mine,
Are changed—they are shadows that darken happy places.

Far are they scattered, either lonely lying,
Or on the hard hillside among the ranks of slain ;
Long on his fever-bed one has lain a-dying,
One rose up and fell with a bullet in his brain.

 Patiently they're sleeping,
 And there's no more weeping—
All weeping ends when weeping is in vain.
Soon are their gravestones worn with sun and rain,
And soon are they forgotten, the young, young faces.

But I still remember them, the merry days together
On the links and the lawns, on the summer fields of play :
White shapes in sunshine, the smack of bat on leather—
Is it others who are playing, or is it they ?

 Strong and light-hearted
 As our comrades departed,
Come the new playmates, and find us fresh and gay.
But deep in my heart I know we're old and grey,
When I see the shadows round us—the young, young faces.

MARCH THOUGHTS FROM ENGLAND

O THAT I were lying under the olives,
 Lying alone among the anemones !
Shell-coloured blossoms they bloom there and scarlet,
Far under stretches of silver woodland,
Flame in the delicate shade of the olives.

O that I were lying under the olives !
Grey grows the thyme on the shadowless headland,
The long low headland, where white in the sunshine,
The rocks run seaward. It seems suspended
Lone in an infinite gulf of azure.

There were I lying under the olives,
Might I behold come following seaward,
Clear brown shapes in a world of sunshine,
A russet shepherd, his sheep too, russet.
Watch them wander the long grey headland
Out to the edge of the burning azure.

O that I were lying under the olives !
So should I see the far-off cities
Glittering low by the purple water,
Gleaming high on the purple mountain ;
See where the road goes winding southward.
It passes the valleys of almond blossom,
Curves round the crag o'er the steep-hanging orchards,
Where almond and peach are aflush 'mid the olives—
Hardly the amethyst sea shines through them—
Over it cypress on solemn cypress
Lead to the lonely pilgrimage places.

O that I were dreaming under the olives !
Hearing alone on a sun-steeped headland
A crystalline wave, almost inaudible,
Steal round the shore ; and thin, far off,
The shepherd's music. So did it sound
In fields Sicilian, Theocritus heard it,
Moschus and Bion piped it at noontide.

O that I were listening under the olives !
So should I hear behind in the woodland
The peasants talking. Either a woman,

A wrinkled grandame, stands in the sunshine,
Stirs the brown soil in an acre of violets—
Large odorous violets—and answers slowly
A child's swift babble ; or else at noon
The labourers come. They rest in the shadow,
Eating their dinner of herbs, and are merry.

Soft speech Provençal under the olives !
Like a queen's raiment from days long perished,
Breathing aromas of old unremembered
Perfumes and shining in dust-covered places
With sudden hints of forgotten splendour—
So on the lips of the peasant his language,
His only now, the tongue of the peasant.

Would I were listening under the olives !
So should I see in an airy pageant
A proud chivalrous pomp sweep by me,
Hear in high courts the joyous ladies
Devising of Love in a world of lovers :
Hear the song of the Lion-hearted,
A deep-voiced song—and oh ! perchance,
Ghostly and strange and sweet to madness,
Rudel sing the Lady of Tripoli.

A BALLADE OF THE NIGHT

FAR from the earth the deep-descended day
Lies dim in hidden sanctuaries of sleep.
The winged winds couched on the threshold keep
Uneasy watch, and still expectant stay
The voice that bids their rushing host delay
No more to rise, and with tempestuous power

Rend the wide veil of heaven. Long watching they
Sigh in the silence of the midnight hour.

Hark ! where the forests slow in slumber sway
Below the blue wild ridges, steep on steep,
Thronging the sky—how shuddering as they leap
The impetuous waters go their fated way,
And mourn in mountain chasms, and as they stray
By many a magic town and marble tower,
As those that still unreconciled obey,
Sigh in the silence of the midnight hour.

Listen—the quiet darkness doth array
The toiling earth, and there is time to weep—
A deeper sound is mingled with the sweep
Of streams and winds that whisper far away.
Oh listen ! where the populous cities lay
Low in the lap of sleep their ancient dower,
The changeless spirit of our changeful clay
Sighs in the silence of the midnight hour.

Sigh, watcher for a dawn remote and gray,
Mourn, journeyer to an undesired deep,
Eternal sower, thou that shalt not reap,
Immortal, whom the plagues of God devour.
Mourn—'tis the hour when thou wert wont to pray.
Sigh in the silence of the midnight hour.

"AGAIN I SAW ANOTHER ANGEL"

I DREAMED a dream within a dream.
An angel cinctured with the gleam
Of topaz and of chrysoprase,
And circled with the lambent rays

That lightened from his sheathless sword,
Leapt into heaven's deserted ways,
And cried, "The message of the Lord!"

Then suddenly the earth was white
With faces turned towards his light.
The nations' pale expectancy
Sobbed far beneath him like the sea,
But men exulted in their dread,
And drunken with an awful glee
Beat at the portals of the dead.

I saw this monstrous grave the earth
Shake with a spasm as though of birth,
And shudder with a sullen sound,
As though the dead stirred in the ground.
And that great angel girt with flame
Cried till the heavens were rent around,
"Come forth ye dead!"—Yet no man came.

Then there was silence overhead :
But far below the ancient dead
Muttered as if in mockery ;
And there was darkness in the sky,
And rolling through the realm of death,
Laughter and some obscure reply,
With tongues that none interpreteth.

Ay, laugh ye undeluded dead !
The wrathful vintagers that tread
The wine-press of the world ye know,
How often shall your graves below
Rock to the thunder of their feet ?
The angels of the whirlwind sow
Fierce seed the children take for wheat ?

O seed of blood ! O seed of tears,
Thick sown through all our human years,
What harvest do the days return ?
New thorns to break, new tares to burn,
New angels sent on earth to reap.
This is the recompense we earn—
Lie still, ye dead, lie still and sleep.

AT THE BARRICADE

WAS it a living woman there,
Crouched by the barricade ?
I said, " We have shelter and food to spare,
Come in and rest, for the game is played."
For a moment she lifted her heavy head,
Lifted her heavily drooping hair,
For a moment as a bayonet blade
Gleams in a flying moonbeam, gleamed
Her face upon me passionate-eyed—
But calm as a girl's at her needle seemed
Her voice as she replied.
" 'Tis not worth while to rest," she said,
" I shall soon be dead."

Sunny and still was the long white street ;
You might have fancied the gracious and gay
City was sleeping away the heat
Of a cloudless summer day.
Not a soul save her in the street—
But hark ! There's the regular tramp of marching feet !
They are coming, the Versaillais.

By bridge and boulevard marching on,
Like conquerors proud of a battle won,
Like avengers glad of a vengeance done ;
And never a man to meet them there !
Will no one face them ? Will no one dare
Fire a last shot for the barricade ?

Yes—a shot, another and yet another,
One racing close on the heels of the other,
Six flying straight for the ranks, that swayed
Back for a startled moment, then
Hoarsely roaring for slaughter and strife,
With a tiger bound took the barricade.
Throbbled in their ears as on they came
The low fierce voice of a distant flame,
Pouring over with bullet and knife,
They were ready to clash with a murderous horde,
Ready to close with desperate men,
Eager to struggle and smite and wade
Onward as conquerors, deep in blood.
But not to face one woman, one
Waiting them there alone.

As a tiger the lone hunter's eye
Baulks in its spring and holds amazed,
Growling, crouched reluctantly,
Thus paused they and thus gazed.
Still as herself the captain stood
Awhile and then there clashed his sword,
Suddenly dropping into its sheath.
“You're a brave woman, you !
Two of my men shot dead !” “But two ?
God forgive me ! It is too few.
I should have taken a life for a life.
All of us, all you have done to death,
The father first, but the boys fought well

‘They will live to avenge us yet,’ I said.
Two of the four at Neuilly fell
And two—just here I found them dead.
But I not yet am wholly slain—
Finish your work. Fire once again.”

THE SOWERS

WOE to the seed
The winds carry
O'er fallow and mead!
They do not tarry,

They seek the sea,
The barren strand,
Where foam-flakes flee
O'er the salt land.

Where the sharp spray
And sand are blown,
In the wind's play
The seed is sown.

Falling on shore
It cries, “The earth
Opens her door!
There shall be birth

“From thee far place,
From thee fair hour,
Splendour and grace
Of leaf and flower.”

Falling on sea
It cries, "Again
Com'st thou to me,
Refreshing rain—

Only more great,
More strong thou art,
Like to my fate,
Like to my heart."

On barren shore,
Or sullen wave,
When storms are o'er
It finds a grave.

TASSO TO LEONORA

I

REPROACH me not because the many chide,
Calling me prouder than an Emperor's son,
For so the shepherds called Endymion,
When he had won the mateless moon to bride.
Proud?—Oh, a monarch must forget his pride,
On whom the light of such a love hath shone,
Showing him worth but dim oblivion,
A mortal set at an Immortal's side.

Rather one face, one hour, one master-thought
Stamped on the body and soul of him he bore,
And the world's business like a distant roar
To that tense mind his slackened senses brought.
And men he scorned not, save as the unborn
Or the forgetful dead sleeping appear to scorn.

II

No, there is none in all the earth save thee,
And never was, not through the length of time.
One is the sea whose everlasting chime
Cradles the world, however variously
Named on its sundered shores, and thou, my sea,
Streamest through every spiritual clime ;
The kings of thought, the laurelled lords of rhyme,
Are names of thine or silent shades to me.

Thou to this heart canst never more be mute,
Though of that dumb fraternity of Death,
While there is sweetness in the viol and lute
And power in speech of man, and while with breath
Drawn from the world's worn air I fan the flame
That shatters and consumes and re-creates this frame.

III

I shall forget thee—yes, I shall forget
Thee and the Heavens that glorify the night,
Those silver summits trembling in the light
Of the descended moon, suns that have set,
Earth and the shoreless waters, all that yet
Has winged my soul for her tempestuous flight—
And dreams they send to seek me shall but light
On some gray stone wreathed with the violet.

Mingling thy dust with men that knew thee not,
Of me forgetful then thou'lt not complain,
And all we were shall be so much forgot
They who the history of our days rehearse
Shall call my grief a phantom of the brain,
Thy name a flower wrought on a poet's verse.

IV

Thou art a sword that's sheathèd in my heart,
 To be by no adventure drawn again,
 A divine vintage flooding every vein
 With an immortal joy, even such thou art.
 The Mænad Hours amid their dancing start
 With haggard eyes from that empurpling stain.—
 "See! Is it wine or blood?" they shriek in vain,
 And heavily with garments dyed depart.

The Muse's self, the fierce relentless Muse
 Art thou, that doth in love of man delight,
 Kindling upon the lips her kisses choose
 A flame that shall eternally be bright,
 Fanned by Mnemosyne with fervent breath,
 And watched by those grim guardians, Time and Death.

PASSING

WITH thoughts too lovely to be true,
 With thousand, thousand dreams I strew
 The path that you must come. And you
 Will find but dew.

I set an image in the grass,
 A shape to smile on you. Alas!
 It is a shadow in a glass,
 And so will pass.

I break my heart here, love, to dower
 With all its inmost sweet your bower.
 What scent will greet you in an hour?
 The gorse in flower.

A LAST WALK TOGETHER

FROM end to end of the skies,
Wherever a blossom flow'rs,
Wherever a swallow flies,
The world is the Spring's and ours.

To-day you are mine, my own,
Whatever may chance to-morrow ;
You reign in my heart alone,
Without a shadow of sorrow.

The Spring will never return.
There'll come again and again
A fire in the months to burn,
A sound of sighs in the rain.

But the Spring will be over and done.
My soul, there are men who miss
The hour that we two shall have won,
Who walk in the wood and kiss.

We have emptied the cup of the earth,
And I break it here at your feet ;
What else could it hold were worth
The savour of hours so sweet ?

And I never shall envy the dead,
The dead who sleep and forget
The forest in flower overhead,
Springtime and love and regret.

GAUDEAMUS IGITUR

COME, no more of grief and dying !
Sing the time too swiftly flying.
Just an hour
Youth's in flow'r,
Give me roses to remember
In the shadow of December.

Fie on steeds with leaden paces !
Winds shall bear us on our races.
Speed, O speed,
Wind, my steed !
Beat the lightning for your master,
Yet my Fancy shall fly faster.

Give me music, give me rapture !
Youth that's fled can none recapture,
Not with thought
Wisdom's bought.
Out on pride and scorn and sadness !
Give me laughter, give me gladness.

Sweetest Earth, I love and love thee,
Seas about thee, skies above thee,
Sun and storms,
Hues and forms
Of the clouds with floating shadows
On thy mountains and thy meadows.

Earth, there's none that can enslave thee,
Not thy lords it is that have thee ;
Not for gold
Art thou sold,

But thy lovers at their pleasure
Take thy beauty and thy treasure.

While sweet fancies meet me singing,
While the April blood is springing
 In my breast,
 While a jest
And my youth thou yet must leave me,
Fortune, 'tis not thou canst grieve me.

When at length the grasses cover
Me, the world's unwearied lover,
 If regret
 Haunt me yet,
It shall be for joys untasted,
Nature lent and folly wasted.

Youth and jests and summer weather,
Goods that kings and clowns together
 Waste or use
 As they choose,
These, the best, we miss pursuing
Sullen shades that mock our wooing.

Feigning Age will not delay it—
When the reckoning comes we'll pay it,
 Own our mirth
 Has been worth
All the forfeit light or heavy
Wintry Time and Fortune levy.

Feigning grief will not escape it,
What though ne'er so well you ape it—
 Age and care
 All must share,
All alike must pay hereafter,
Some for sighs and some for laughter.

Know, ye sons of Melancholy,
To be young and wise is folly.

 'Tis the weak
 Fear to wreak
On this clay of life their fancies,
Shaping battles, shaping dances.

While ye scorn our names unspoken,
Roses dead and garlands broken,

 O ye wise,
 We arise,
Out of failures, dreams, disasters,
We arise to be your masters.

THE SONG OF THE LUTE PLAYER

STILL as a star came to my breast
 A joy unbidden,
Not to be known, not to be guessed,
 So fair, so hidden ;
And now within 'tis like the starry night,
The unimagined pure ethereal height,
Trembling in loneliness at its own light.

Heaven of my joy, fair though thou art,
 A light for ever,
Yet there's a grief hid in my heart
 Like the great river.
At times a little while it seems to sleep,
And then a voice cries to it from the deep,
And all its floods over my spirit sweep.

Hast thou a joy? Though but a flow'r,
O maiden, bring it!
Though but a dream of morning hour,
Yet will I sing it.
And as a bird that calls its mate my strain
—Listen, the lute begins like falling rain—
Shall call the Spring and Spring return again.

Hast thou a fear hid in thy heart,
A sorrow sleeping?
Light though it be, soon to depart,
I'll sing it weeping.
The ruined shrines shall answer as I sing,
In hollow tombs of many an ancient king
Forgotten woes shall waken murmuring.

Then in my song, maiden, I'll weave
The world's emotion,
Passion of souls that laugh and grieve,
And Earth and Ocean.
The silver spheres shall hush awhile their quire,
Saying, 'Return, lost star of our desire,
Lend us again thy music and thy fire.'

Only my joy, only my pain
May not be spoken.
These would I tell, earthward again
The song drops broken.
Sleeping I dream my joy, my sorrow sing.
I wake—the lonely night is listening
To one long sigh, breathed from a shattered string.

THE DANCE OF VANITY

(MODERN STYLE)

SELFISHNESS has swept the house,
Vanity has garnished it,
With desires furnished it.
Not a crumb to feed a mouse
Have they left of household bread,
Duty, honour, charity.
“Food for common mortals,” said
Vanity.

Stood the Master by the door,
Underneath the jessamine.
Was it he who let them in,
Or the wind that round the floor
Whirled the dropping jessamine?
“Come in,
Every fine new-fangled Sin
And rarity!
Come in! Come in!
Welcome! Would that ye were more!”
Shrills the shape behind the door—
Vanity.

Nakedness for all disguise,
Rank as earth created them,
Foul as when Christ hated them,
Enter these deformities,
Each like beauties, asking eyes.
Hump and tumour, tusk and horn,
Hospitable Vanity’s
Hands with jewelled wreaths adorn.
O Rarities!

Turn a switch, let all the house
Glow with lamps of Carnival,
And as to a king's festival
Whom the world would see carouse,
Bid with a mechanic blare
The loud incessant trumpet call.

Run the neighbours, lean and stare
Outside the garden fence—
The odour of the jessamine
Is faint as dying Innocence—
What is that they see within ?

Sin by Sin
Marching naked each enormity ;
Piping in magnificence
Stalks before my Lady Vanity.

Even in Hell the fashions reign ;
So each Sin to revelry
Leads a favourite devilry,
Trotting in a coat and chain.
When the wind showers within
The ruin of the jessamine,
The curs of Hell in delight
Chasing the petals, bark and bite
Merrily.

There be revellers fair, yet strange
Almost as a naked Sin,
Rayonnant, with deep salute—
Being not too proud for snobbery—
Lady Vanity welcomes in.
Wandering Oceanides
That remember not their seas,
Yet wave-like ever range and range,
Their blond, blond hair

With unvalued pearls entwining
And subtle gold, the sea's robbery.
From afar

Where eternal forests tower
Murmuring to the mountains mute,
Young dark Dryades—
They have dyed their tresses fair,
Being in love with falsities—

Satyrs that can wear a boot,
Egoists decked with Christianity :
Then a star
Pale with pride to be so rare.
Weary was he of Heaven's power
And the constellations' shining.
"Welcome, noble company !"
Cries Vanity.

Overhead begin to float
Harmonies half terrestrial,
Such as Pan the celestial
Made to pleasure Pan the goat.
Yet nor breath of Man nor string
Nor quires that in heaven sing,
Make this music rise and fall ;
But a travelling troupe of sparks
Electrical.

Begin, begin,
The 'cello and the violin,
Like the wavering of a lark's
Wings a moment ere he'll soar
And straight into the sun spring.
Press a button, then 'twill pour
Sounds orchestral,
Voices out of iron throats

Showering notes
Hard as hail along the roof.
Holla ! Holla ! a brazen din—
Beat the time with heel and hoof !
“’Tis a new original Dance of Sin
To which the old are mere inanity,
We do gloriously begin.
Marvelling Public, stand aloof !”
Cries Vanity.

Speeds the riot from roof to floor.
There amusing Malice is,
With patens and with chalices,
Juggling till the room’s a-roar.
Neighbours yonder push for places,
While the very dancers pause,
Crowding faces
Writhe around him in applause.

Reels the Master to the door
Drunken with his own delight,
Watches with exultant grin
Outside the garden fence
More and more
Pale upon the edge of night,
People gather, peering in.
“Neighbours ! What ? You’re in a fright ?
Hypocrites,
With your halos torn to bits !
Paper fetters of pretence
Laid on human pride and passion
Rent with laughter ! Prophecy
Ancient men ! All the faster
Younger wits
Will adore and ape our fashion.”

Youth and maiden whispering eye
Yonder house, and drawing nigh
Bow themselves before the Master.
“We would also servants be
Of Vanity.”

* * * *

The silver dawn comes tardily
Lingering a long while in heaven,
Unregardful of the plain.

Then he sees they are but seven
Dancing so hardily.
Their seven curs against the wall
Sit and snarl when they call.
Looking, in a sudden terror
Quoth he, “Tell me why
They are but seven.”
Vanity
Makes no reply,
Painting her face before a mirror.

The lonely dawn is at the door.
Will they never come again,
The crowd that used to look and wonder?
Not a soul he sees about.
Overhead the jessamine
Hangs black and blasted to the core,
Yet he fain would linger under.
But the seven Sins begin to shout,
And a young man passing, jeers.

Then he sees beyond a doubt
These sins are old as all years.
“Why do these grey dotards come?”
To Vanity he cries.

"I will have but new Sins here."

"In and out, out and in,"

She replies,

"I have sought for a new Sin.

All are old ones in disguise."

Tap! Tap, Tap! Is that a drum?

Tap! Tap! It is drawing near.

The seven curs begin to whimper,

Vanity forgets her simper

And the arrogance of her sneer.

There's one will outgrin her here.

Now he's at the fence and over,

Strutting up the garden, prouder

Than a piper. Loud and louder

The drum he bangs

That black below his girdle hangs,

Busily jumping, as he plays.

No use to bid him hence,

This Captain every man obeys.

"Form up! Attention! March!"

First the Master, single file

After him the rest are coming,

Vanity

And the Sins in their degree.

Endlessly they seem to go,

The Master and his company,

Limping on, and all the while

Stalks before the drummer drumming,

Till there's nothing strikes the sense,

Nothing is, except that drumming.

It fills with long reverberant rolls
Heaven as 'twere a solid arch—

Hark ! a sound beating slow !
'Tis the knell of God that tolls
For the burial of souls.

A MAY SONG

O SHEPHERDESS come,
Come wander away !
For young is the morning
And fresh is the May.

A green world about us,
A blue world on high,
White bloom on the branches,
White clouds in the sky.

O were we two poets
We'd loiter to sing
Through the sun-wakened city
The joy of the Spring,

And were we two painters
We surely should stay
To capture for ever
The fresh-coloured May.

But beauty of May-time
Escapes from our praise ;
We should miss our sweet meaning
And miss the sweet days.

There's piping and singing
In thicket and grass,
And murmur in meadows
Of streams as they pass,

And high in the Heaven
There's a lark that upstarts
With the song of the May
And the song of our hearts.

O Shepherdess come,
Come wander away !
For young is the morning
And fresh is the May.

AN EASTERN LEGEND

The legend tells that a Magician stole the heart of a queen, and kept it always hidden either in the sea, in the tree-tops, or in the earth.

IN cloisters dim and haunted
She met me and I said :
“ Art thou the queen enchanted
Of whom long since I read ?
Whose heart a great magician
Has hidden from her birth,
Either in the deep ocean,
The forest or the earth.”

She seemed a monarch's daughter,
Her body like a palm,
Her voice like silver water
That speaks when all is calm.

She answered, "It is hidden."
And smiling dreamily,
"But messengers unbidden
Bring news of it to me.
The wildest nights creep hither
All dumb, with muffled feet,
Yet through the halcyon weather
I often feel the fleet
Fresh wind about me blowing
And power within my breast,
As of the great seas flowing
That do not ask for rest.

"O then my heart is driven
I know 'twixt shore and shore.
The moon is large in heaven,
The gathering waters roar.
The sullen trees unshaken
Keep charmèd shadow here,
Nor know how woods awaken
Afar when spring is near.
Yet from the boughs wild voices
Are sometimes calling me ;
The soul of me rejoices,
The frozen blood runs free,
And needs I must go roaming
And sing and laugh alone,
While through the magic gloaming
Strange lights are tossed and blown.

"'Tis when mid forest branches
My heart keeps watch and sees
As wind the water blanches,
How spring makes red the trees.
About my trancèd slumber
At moments rise and sweep

Dread visions without number
That battle and that weep ;
And more than men who waken
I know of Death and Birth,
Because my heart is taken
And buried in the Earth."

I said : " The habitation
Of dreams is not for thee.
Tell me what incantation,
What toil can set thee free ?
Surely thy soul desireth
The sun and moon for light,
Ay, and the glow that fireth
The festal halls at night.
The springtime in its sweetness,
The summer in its strength,
The world in its completeness
Thou shalt possess at length."

Pale, with a solemn gesture
Either of prayer or pain,
She wrapped her in her vesture,
Nor looked on me again.

I heard a hollow crying
In all the palace around,
Like echoes far replying
To unperceived sound,
A clash along the arches
Long drawn on either side,
As of a guard that marches—
It rose and passed and died.
Her saw I not, nor even
Shadows of living things,

Save that without the seven
Great sphinxes stirred their wings ;
They who with sleepless vision
For ever contemplate,
Smiling in still derision,
The world and men and fate.

EVISA : A SKETCH IN CORSICA

THROUGH the rose-red chasms and the gorges
Of granite and porphyry,
The mountain river surges
And battles down to the sea,
Deep, deep out of sight,
Save where a flash of white
Sometimes leaps in the sun
And then is gone.

And a giant might shoot with an arrow,
Mile upon mile though it be,
Through the cloven mountain, the narrow
Sheer portal out to the sea.
The sea shines purple and blue,
Save where a sanguine hue
Melts in it under the shapes
Of the bare fantastic capes,
Coloured like Autumn eves,
Or a rose's inner leaves.
On the sea is a single skiff,
Above, 'twixt cliff and cliff,
A grey sea-eagle swings
Lone upon wide wings.

ON THE HEATH

A DESOLATE heath
Over the sea
Is the place for me,
When night is near,
When a wind upleaps
Seaward and sweeps
The horizon clear.
Widening beneath
Darkens the heath.

Sullen and far
Hark how they roar,
Waves of the shore,
Trees of the wood.
Heaven in her cloud,
Earth in her shroud,
Sullenly brood.
Smiles a white star
Silent and far.

Under the height
Yonder a glare
Reddens the air,
Where in the bay
Rigging and spars
Glow with their stars,
City and quay
Glitter to-night
Under the height.

O but for me
Purple of pine

In a sandy chine,
 When the night-wind's breath
 Will bare us soon
 The wan young moon.
 A desolate heath
 Over the sea
 Is the place for me.

THE MAD SHEPHERDESS

A FRAGMENT

[A mountain pasture above a ravine. A valley below with bright green pastures and scattered houses and fruit-trees. The Mad Shepherdess sits on a stone, turning a distaff. She is small and old, and wears a black mantle over her head. Heteros, her familiar spirit, sits at her feet.]

MAD SHEPHERDESS

I AM the Mad Shepherdess, cold, so cold.
 Poor little feet, frozen and blue,
 Never a stocking and a wooden shoe !

HETEROS

No matter !
 Put 'em down, measure 'em from side to side.
 How many inches in a world how wide ?
 Ha, ha, ha !

MAD SHEPHERDESS

I am the Mad Shepherdess, lonely and old.
 When I was young, when I was twenty,
 Would I be sad, pity was plenty ;

But now, but now I may go sorrow.
Yet to be fair and fade to-morrow,
Yet to be young so short a season,
Were there not reason
That one should sorrow ?

HETEROS

Yet to be old, be sick and lone,
Lastly, to die ! Was ever known
Grief so uncommon ?
Ha, ha, ha !

MAD SHEPHERDESS

Terrible

Are common things, dreadful and strange
Beyond all else are Man and Woman,
Death and Birth and Time and Change
And that which is unchanged.

HETEROS

So when at last the Great Inventor
Marvellous Man had consummated,
Man, the ingenious toy,
He found, after all, He had ill created.
“ Nothing I give may Man enjoy,”
He said, and was vexed. “ With Pain at the root,
Life the blossom, and Death the fruit,
This work of mine is flawed at the centre.
I made it and will destroy.”
“ Why ? ” asked the Spirit who contemplates.
“ Because on his perilous good there waits—
And Man must perceive it—the shadow, Ill ?
I know a remedy. Grant him still
Another gift after many given—
The body its Earth and the mind her Heaven.

Give him a power which is mighty above
 Courage and Wisdom, Beauty and Love,
 A gift from the gods for ever hid,
 A charm to baffle the hounding Fates,
 Yea, from himself to set him free :
 Give him, O Maker, Stupidity ! ”
 This the Maker did.
 And Man complete went forth to climb
 Bravely the giddy stair of Time.

MAD SHEPHERDESS

I am the Mad Shepherdess, quite mad,
 Since I behold that which is here
 And should not be seen.
 No matter !
 Heteros, Heteros is my dear,
 And together we dance on the white and the green.

(They dance and sing)

*Hey nonny nonny no !
 There's a music in my head
 Will keep my feet a-dancing
 Long after you are dead.
 Ha, ha, ha !
 Hey nonny nonny no !
 Who would go repining
 While the stars are shining
 And the fiddle has its bow ?*

*(Jessamine, a young girl, climbs up from the ravine and stands
 among the bushes)*

JESSAMINE

Don't, Shepherdess ! Please, don't—you frighten me,

MAD SHEPHERDESS

Frighten you ? Why, Jessamine, flower o' the stars ?

JESSAMINE

Dancing alone there. Do you dance alone ?
I can see nothing, nothing with my eyes.

MAD SHEPHERDESS

Nay, for I dance alone.

JESSAMINE

Hush ! hush ! You do not.
Something is here. O, it whirls giddily !
No, not near me ! Away, mad thing !

MAD SHEPHERDESS

Young sweet Jessamine,
Flower o' the stars,
Why do you come to visit me ?
I am dangerous.

JESSAMINE

No, Shepherdess. The untaught villagers
Believe so. I am sorry for you, Shepherdess.

MAD SHEPHERDESS (*singing and dancing*)

*Come along stupid, don't be afraid,
Numskull man and clumping maid !
I can change your awkward prances
Into fleet and foamy dances.
You whose precious world encloses
Hardly what's beneath your noses,
Come ! I'll give you sudden seeing,
Till you laugh with joy of being.*

(Ceases to dance)

But you, Jessamine, have seen too much already.

JESSAMINE

I, Shepherdess ? I have seen nothing,
 Except the convent schoolroom and my home there,
 In the broad fields of the valley.
 O, to see !
 To wander air-borne, invisible,
 About the world !
 To pass as the wind passes over great cities
 And watch how under
 The packed street flows full of the pride of Life !
 To know how, streaming, storming, the passion of Life
 Breaks and beats, encountering wave with wave,
 Round a million roofs, magnificent, like the sea !

MAD SHEPHERDESS

Are you so ordinary
 As to imagine the World merely the City ?
 The World is everywhere, 'tis every one ;
 We two and the watching mountains are the World
 As much, ay more, than twenty men in the street
 Passing a borrowed phrase from mouth to mouth,
 Like the tooth of the three Grey Women.

HETEROS (*invisible*)

Where is the use of travelling ?
 You want to see ? Just buy my magic glass.
 My magic mirror's imagings
 Show you the other side of things.
 Though all the various earth you see,
 Her scenes without my glass and me
 Are flat as drawing on a slate ;

But with it, from the garden gate
I'll show you more than many a man
Can see 'twixt Rome and Yucatan.

JESSAMINE

What did you say, Shepherdess ?

MAD SHEPHERDESS

I ? O, nothing,
For I am mad ; you, maiden, were as mad
To ask of me a counsel.
Go home, Jessamine. Already in the gully,
Hollow and chill and hoarse the torrent roars.
Why did you visit me,
Flower o' the stars ?

JESSAMINE

Do you not know the stories
That else were unremembered ?
Know the songs,
The old plain tunes with hidden harmonies
Enriched of many souls
That have loved, laughed, sighed through them
Hundreds of years ?

MAD SHEPHERDESS

A song I know for you, a new song
Of an old tale never told.

(Sings)

*Go not alone, alone among the mountains
If thou dost love the stars,
For it might be alone among the mountains
A star would love thee too.*

*Swift star out of heaven riding,
Bridle of silver, mane of fire,
Star out of heaven riding,
Why dost thou rush to earth?*

And the star answers :

*A lonely maiden waits me yonder,
Young as a flower at morn,
Yet have I loved her for a thousand years,
And all too long she waits me yonder.*

*Suddenly, as the flowers come after snow,
She came, and she will go.
Therefore from heaven riding,
See how I rush to earth !*

And so the star was never seen again.

* * * * *

THE STRAYED LOVER

I'VE lost the way to Sylvia's heart.
What impish sprite possessed me
To wander so from Sylvia's heart ?
I'll ask at every sage's door,
And study, if mid ancient lore
Old lovers drew on wrinkled charts,
The scarlet road to women's hearts.
I'll weary midnight lamps and call
The wooing sun vain prodigal,

Until I come to Sylvia's heart,
And peace again has blest me.

Lost lover, no !
Forbear !
They cannot point the road,
By sea or land it does not fare,
Or coiled dragon's dim abode.
There is no chart
Nor any road to Sylvia's heart.

I've lost the way to Sylvia's heart,
Oh, teach me how to find it—
The way I seek to Sylvia's heart !
Though long it be, though mountain-rude,
By gulfs of roaring solitude
It wind, if but at length it come
To that my dear accustomed home,
If but it end in Sylvia's heart,
Be sure I shall not mind it.

Ah, no, no, no !
In vain,
Pilgrim, in vain you'll go,
And, seeking so,
Must needs return again.
Such roads may reach the stars, we know,
Or fade in snow ;
They never come to Sylvia's heart.

Lost wretch ! Exiled from Sylvia's heart,
Whose happy fortune fell there !
No road, no chart to Sylvia's heart !
Some desperate way in pity tell,
Some triple charm, some midnight spell—
Fond lover, know the charm is this :

A look, a sigh, a smile, a kiss,
A pleading look, a gentle sigh,
And back to Sylvia's heart you fly—
Then, having found it, dwell there.

GHOSTS

WHERE the columned cliffs far out have planted
Their daring shafts in the Northern foam,
There hangs a castle that should be haunted,
A ruin meet for a phantom's home.

For heavily in the caverns under
The hidden tide like a muffled drum,
Beats distinct through the level thunder
Of the wintry waste whence storm-winds come.

And fire has blackened the mouldering rafter,
And stairs have crumbled from bolted doors ;
At night there's a sound of wail and laughter,
And footsteps crossing the creaking floors.

And in and out through the courts forsaken
Wild shapes are drifted from hall to hall,
With a trumpet sound the towers are shaken,
And banners flutter along the wall.

'Tis but the storms and the seas enchant it,
Its ghosts are shadow and wind and spray.
If ever a phantom used to haunt it,
That too was mortal and passed away.

The ghosts have found where the hills embosom
A windless garden—they walk at noon,
When the beds and branches burn with blossom,
And hardly wait for the rising moon

When the starry charm of the night is broken
And the day but lives as a child unborn,
They pass with echoes of words once spoken
And silent footsteps and eyes forlorn.

From the blind gray house where all are sleeping
A mocking music sounds wild and clear,
The faint lights glimmer and past them sweeping
The dancers appear and disappear.

And the swinging branches close to cover
The two who tremble there heart to heart,
The ghostly lady and phantom lover,
The souls long parted that cannot part.

They seem as shadows of morn and even,
For ever fading to come again ;
They are as shadows of tempest driven,
Stormily sighing across the plain.

For these depart as the rest departed,
The garden under the hill shall be
As ghost-forsaken, as past-deserted
As the castle over the Northern sea.

NOCTURNE

THIS is the place,
Here shalt thou find
Heart, thy delight.
Only the wind,
Only the night
Deepening apace.

This is the place—
Roses of gold
Strewing the grass
Wane as of old,
Gleam where I pass ;
Never thy face.

Dark is the place,
Sealed like a tomb.
Liest thou dead,
While in the gloom
Whence thou hast fled
Lampless I pace ?

'This is the place,
Why like a ghost,
Why do I come ?
Seeking the lost,
Praying the dumb,
Senseless in chase
Here of a face
I shall elude
Never again—
I, the pursued,
Seeking in vain
Still in this place.

A WOMAN'S APOLOGY

*"So altered are thy face and mind
'Twere perjury to love thee now."*—BYRON.

IF always I had slept within your arms
More calmly had I slept.
The dark-winged Hours with hush of whispering flight
Had gently passed above
That sleep, till one all bright
Had stooped from Heaven's gate and shone on me like
Love.

If always I had wept within your arms
More often had I wept,
Consoled as Earth is comforted with rain.
Hearts may have need of tears,
And tears quench in the brain
The irreparable dark fire that consumes and sears.

If always I had smiled within your arms
More softly had I smiled.
For we who crowd at Life's perpetual Show
Thus eager for the jest,
Are cowards, afraid to know
How Fate and our own souls stand in the obscure contest.

But since I never might within your arms
Live healed and reconciled,
Pardon I ask for this too little change,
Familiar looks, lest these
With superscription strange
Deface a sanctuary, tombs, relics, images.

"WEEP NO MORE"

WEEP no more, for why should sorrow
Spend a time too short for kisses?
Wilt thou weep because to-morrow
Brings no hour so sweet as this is?
O fond heart!
Soon 'tis fled and then we part.

Comes no hour so sweet as this is—
Haste to harvest then such flow'rs
All thine hours
Keep the fragrance of its kisses.

Time but treads the slow sun's measure,
Lightning souls outstrip his fleetness,
Packing half a life-time's pleasure
In a moment of completeness.
Haste, O haste,
Ere such moments run to waste!

Soon shall come an hour for weeping,
Days enough and long to spare
For thy care,
And thy tears shall haunt thee sleeping.

Tears are longer than sweet laughter,
Yet they pass, and being ended,
Like a radiance following after
Stormy eyes from suns descended,
So their rain
Fades into this light again.

THE ANSWER

WANDERING the way of sleep, the timeless shore,
I gathered roses in a wintry place,
And suddenly I saw him face to face
Who in this waking world is seen no more.
I marvelled not the frozen branches bore,
Nor that I saw him, yet—"You never come,
Dearest," I said. "Why do you not come home?"
He nothing spoke, but smiled even as of yore.

And now I often meet him in that land,
And still I ask him why he stays away.
He will not answer me, he will not say,
But smiles as though I needs must understand.
I cry aloud and waking hear my cry—
And then the Eternal Silence makes reply.

QUEM TU, MELPOMENE

AH, no! You never loved the Muse,
Then wherefore should the Muse love you?
Immortal maiden, free to choose,
She does as the Immortals do.
By amber morns and red moon-rises
She roams the land in fair disguises,
And hears the happy shepherd woo.

The twilight's solitary tongue,
The May-time and the flowering thorn,
Old songs of poets newly sung,
Old oaths of lovers newly sworn,

Are sweet to her who ne'er remembers
How every fire will leave but embers,
And knows not that the world's outworn.

The joy of larks that greet the day,
The long cry of the nightingale,
Are hers, as up the eastern way
She meets the air of dawn, the frail
First sunbeams on the dewy grasses,
And ever singing, singing passes
To bid him come who cannot fail.

Ere yet she stands beside his door
Out leaps the shepherd, morning-young.
"O maid, where have we met before?
Where did you learn the song you sung?"
So hand in hand with mingled tresses
And happy sighs and half-caresses,
They dream the quiet fields among.

At eve, when sifted snows are white,
By solitary ways she goes.
The lonely house upon the height,
The lonely hearth and him she knows.
The dying embers drop together,
Cold, cold without the wintry weather,
And on his hair lie chiller snows.

She flits about the shadowed room.
"O art thou Age, thou hooded guest,
Or Death?" he questions in the gloom:
And then his head is on her breast.
The roof-tree buds, the roses cover
The Muse, the young triumphant lover,
The happy shepherd she has blest.

TO THE EARTH

MISTRESS and slave of the sun,
Dancer with shining feet,
Gladly thou springest to greet
The year that is new begun.
Huntress who fliest with fleet
Hounds of the glittering air,
Again thou risest to chase the phantom year to its lair.

Long ere the threescore and ten
Pass us, the sum of our years,
Empty their pageant appears,
Old to the children of men.
April with laughter and tears
Tells a monotonous tale,
Winds of the Autumn in vain wildly and solemnly wail.

Thou whom the ages bereave
Autumn on Autumn, behold,
Thou art not weary or cold ;
Eagerly dost thou receive
Sunshine and rain as of old,
Comest again as a bride
Crowned with immortal delight, dead to the years that
have died.

Hear, O ye planets, her voice !
The vast and jubilant strain
Mountain and ocean and plain
Utter when she doth rejoice.
Surely the sound shall attain
Through sunless spaces afar,
Till it touch the silver heart of some high enthroned
star.

No—for thyself is the tale,
But for thine own hast thou sung.
Often the meadows among,
Laid by the stream in the frail
Shadow of April, there rung
Round me the voice of delight,
Murmur immense of the Earth joying alone in her
might.

Once like a lover I heard,
Once like a lover I pressed
Kiss after kiss on thy breast,
Once all the rapture that stirred,
Streamed from the South and the West,
Flamed from the field and the sky,
Seemed for my heart to exult, seemed to my soul to
reply.

Ah, could one bosom, one brain
Half of thine ecstasy hold?
Lifetime of mortal unfold
One of thy mysteries? Vain,
Vain was the dream. As of old
Messengers worn with the way
Fell at the Delphian's gate, fall I before thee to-day.

Hark how the Pythoness cries!
Priest to interpret is none,
Never a word to be won
Out of the rushing replies
Echoes pursue ere they're done.
Only I know 'twas a song
Passed me, escaped ere it taught me too the joy of the
strong.

Well mayst thou, Mother, be glad,
Great in a quenchless belief,
Well may we grow in our brief
Journey indifferent or sad.
Witnessing often the leaf
Broaden and wither, we see
Never the full up-shoot and branching growth of the
tree.

Thou hearest the giant heart
Of a forest beating low
In the seed that faint winds sow
On an island far apart ;
And thou canst measure the slow
Lapse of the glittering sea,
Where it falls and clings round the land like a robe at a
bather's knee.

Yea, thou hast witnessed the whole
Age-long upbuilding of things ;
Through the ephemeral Springs
One indestructible soul,
Sleepless, unwearied that brings
Order from chaos at length,
Out of the fading and weak infinite splendour and
strength.

THE ETERNAL

EARTH is His garment and also heaven,
Its skirts are broadened from day to day
By a million shining shuttles driven
Through a formless woof till a form is given,
And the suns break forth like the buds in May.

The rushing river, the pulsing ocean,
The clouds when they clash and find a voice,
Are as folds that heave with a heart's emotion,
That cling and swing with the dancer's motion
When the sunburnt girls of the South rejoice.

Lo, when the vision of Man perceiveth
Beneath what all living eyes can see,
The mighty and jubilant heart that heaveth,
The Life that the dance of the forces weaveth,
He trembles perceiving and bows the knee.

And first he worships the Life in Nature,
He fashions him gods of earth and sky,
Strong lawless lords of the sentient creature,
He lends them language and name and feature
And an ear to hear when the nations cry.

He rears him altars where clouds are driven
Like dumb white surf on the rocks below.
Set in the midst of the spacious heaven
They watch while the world is tempest-riven,
How the lamps of God serenely glow.

But the years go by that deaden wonder,
And mute in the desert of the mind
He sits at last, while the wind and thunder
Sweep past and the deep Earth trembles under,
Yet the Spirit therein he cannot find.

He cries, "Art silent and dark for ever,
Thou Fear, Thou Light of the Universe?
Wilt thou as soul from body sever
The might of Thy word from Man's endeavour?
Speak to us Thunderer, though to curse!"

Answer, O Spirit, in exultation !
Spirit of God that still doth move
Over the deep of our Creation,
Spirit of Man in aspiration,
Answer with Mercy and Law and Love !

VALE ATQUE AVE

I SHALL return to thee,
Earth, O dearest
Mother of mine !

I who have loved thee with joy everlasting,
Endless discovery, newness diurnal ;
I who with every delight of my heart,
As with strands of gold, have enwoven the fairest
Flowers of thy beauty, whose sorrows yearn for thee.

See, with no gesture
Of long resignation, of farewell eternal,
Now I depart,
But as to some new festival hasting,
I bid them fall from me, disentwine
The withered garland, the worn vesture.

Not as a warrior
Lost and defeated,
Out of thy legions
Perished and gone,

Lady, I pass from the fight into regions
Hid from its roar—but the battered armour
Bruises the limbs, the sword is broken.
Loose me them gently, cast them undone,
After thy manner,
Into thy crucible, the seven-times heated.

I to the front, to thy face still address
Shall await the recall, shall watch for the token,
Leap at the word. I ask not rest,
But a trustier steel—and back to the banner !

I who have suffered
All in the hurtle
Of thy dreadful wars ;
Fierce mutilation,
Red gaping wounds, ineffaceable scars,
Unspeakable treachery and supreme disaster.
But thou madest my heart in its creation
A well of healing, and wherever devouring
Flame had swept and the blackness of fire would strew
My way, the ashes have burst into sudden flow'ring
Of lovely affection and streams unexpected proffered
Waters of comfort, wandering clouds dropped dew—
And about the head, where the Spirit of Fire had cast her
Ashen veil, was woven a crown of myrtle.

What if they cry to me,
Worlds adolescent,
With violent voices,
Throwing their wide
Circling net of invisible forces
In the seas of space ! Their hearts incandescent
Rage in rivalry one with another,
“ Life ! O my thirst ! ” crying, “ Life ! O my hunger !
I must have more Life, to conceive, to push up
In a rapture of Being. Life ! Come, fly to me ! ”
Though the mightiest craved me, shrieked in her pride,
“ I will have thee, thou drop of red wine, in my cup,
I will suck thee from Earth ! I am greater and younger ”—
Yet would I cleave to thee, Earth, my mother.

Me thy unending
Drama of Destiny,
Pageant of Life

Holds a spectator untired of its terror,
Pathos and beauty, mystery, comedy,
Harlequinade and heroic strife.

And thy dreams, dearest ! Ah ! They reprove thee
Because thou hast given us dreams that are far more fair
Than reality and perish sooner or later.

But I praise thee because in thy magic mirror
Thou hast shown us a face fairer than earthly, a greater
Light than the sun's, a love that no heart can share.
For the dreams' sake, most for the dreams I love thee.

'Tis for thy choosing
How I shall serve thee.
Yet may it be

I in my Now, Afterwards fashioned,
Making this energy meet but for using
In the fight and the fury of lives elemental.
Wilt thou in lightning scatter ? Reserve me
Ages a force in the seethe of thy central
Bosom ? Not so, for some leap of the heart
That loved so thy beauty would burst into being
In a field full of flowers, in the sap of a tree
That pushes and frets for the Springtime's freeing—
A tree monumental, unimpassioned,
In silent beauty, immense, apart.

Up, not to fall again
Into the welter ;
Up, see, this urgent
Life of me pushes,

Swings now on white wings where the wave dances
Rhythmical, pipes in the coppice-wood shelter
Low, with strange sweet hesitancies

Till a song floods full on the night of Maytime.
With the galloping rhythm of hoofs it rushes,
Leaps in some merry brown beast at its playtime,
Suffers and dies one way or another,
Learning the lessons that Life must learn.
But I shall still blindly fumble and wait
Till the true door open, the true voice call again ;
And back to the human high estate,
Back to the whole of the soul, resurgent,
O Earth ! O dearest ! I shall return,
I shall return to thee Earth, my mother.

SONGS

SONGS

I

LEND me the lyre again,
The long forsaken !
One tone it must retain,
One song of all the store
I gave to it of yore
Sleeps there to waken.

Wreathe me the lyre again !
Moonflowers and sorrel
Gather by stream and plain,
Weaving a thousand flowers
Under the wild-rose bowers,
But not the laurel.

Give me the lyre again !
As Heaven that sent it
Sucks from the earth her rain,
So from the trembling lyre
My soul shall drink the fire
That once she lent it.

II

Like the wreath the poet sent
To the lady of old time,
Roses that were discontent
With their brief unhonoured prime,
Crown he hoped she might endow
With the beauty of her brow ;

Even so for you I blent,
Send to you my wreath of rhyme.

These alas ! be blooms less bright,
Faded buds that never blew,
Darkling thoughts that seek the light—
Let them find it finding you.
Bid these petals pale unfold
On your heart their hearts of gold,
Sweetness for your sole delight,
Love for odour, tears for dew.

III

When the world's asleep,
I awake and weep,
Deeply sighing say,
"Come, O break of day,
Lead my feet in my beloved's way."

When the morning breaks,
When the world awakes,
Then a dream too dear
Haunts me like a fear,
And as one in sleep I linger here.

If some star of heaven
Led him by at even,
If some magic fate
Brought him, should I wait,
Or fly within and bid them close the gate ?

IV

Say not I never told my love for thee.
There's not a rose, a rose in all the garden,
But I have whispered to its leaves—"I love thee."

Say not I never spoke my love for thee.
There's not a wind, a wind of morn or even,
Wherever out of heaven it blows and goes,
Clamouring of day or sighing for the moon,
But I have vaunted to that wind—"I love thee."

Then did the roses tell thee and the wind.
So must it be, else hadst thou never known
My love for thee, my sweet and infinite love.

V

After the Arabic

Lend me thy wings, O dove,
But for a day,
And I will fly away,
Fly to my love.
Fearst thou I shall delay?
Ah no! thou needst not fear,
Because though I should stay
But for a moment's space,
To look upon his face,
I shall return with love enough to last a year.

VI

The weary moon goes down into the West
As one that fain would rest,
And nothing now is waking in the skies

Except the luminous eyes
Of stars that watch thee where thou wanderest.
Wilt not thou also rest ?

Now all the earth lies hushed in shadowy sleep,
City and plain and steep ;
Only the river journeying from afar
Towards the Northern star,
Rolls through the slumbering world its waters deep,
That whisper to thee, " Sleep."

And now is peace in that belovèd breast,
Peace, the long absent guest ;
For fear is dead, and sorrow sleeps forgot,
Love only slumbers not,
Love wakes for thee that doubting tarriest.
Wilt thou not also rest ?

VII

I know thee, O thou wailing wind !
Thou comest from the summer's tomb,
Regretting what is left behind,
The glory dimmed, the lost perfume.

Could I remember, wailing wind,
As thou rememberest, I could weep,
And weeping thus I should unbind
The dead from their eternal sleep.

But still they sleep, remorseful wind,
They moulder passive, cold and mute ;
Wayfaring thoughts and passions blind
Pass by and tread them under foot.

VIII

I've heard, I've heard
The long low note of a bird,
The nightingale fluting her heart's one word.

I know, I know
Pink carnations heaped with snow.
Summer and winter alike they blow.

I've lain, I've lain
Under roses' delicate rain,
That fall and whisper and fall again.

Come woe, come white
Shroud o' the world, black night !
I have had love and the sun's light.

IX

Serenade of the Fairy Lover

Whether sleeping, whether waking,
Fairest dreams be thine to-night,
If my heart may have their making !
Unto thee, O young Delight,
Speed my wings, with odours laden.
Honey-sweet, gathered far,
Out of the Eden of every star,
Soft they charm thy dreaming eyelids, maiden.

Eyes from earthy blindness breaking,
Look on Heaven's joy to-night,
Whether sleeping, whether waking !
Mortal phantoms lose their might,
Dust that weaves thy mortal prison,
Wall of stone, gate of brass,
Be as vapour, change and pass
Shining round thee, O thou Light new risen !

Whether waking, whether sleeping,
Joy shall hold thy heart to-night,
If my heart may have its keeping.
Hand in hand up Heaven's height
Will we race and laugh in wonder ;
Climb the moon's silver boat,
Sail in it where we will and float
Far among the golden islands yonder.
Hounds of Time never shall find
Track of us, baying along the wind,
While we lovers lean and mock them under.

x

From the Princess of Hanover

When Cupid fell from golden Hell
To earth, sweet earth,
Mid April blooms he tossed his plumes,
And robbed the tongue of every bird
In vain, in vain to tell
The rapture Heaven has never heard,
To tell the wondering earth
His happy heavenly mirth.

The airy flight of blossoms white
 Pale, pale and frail,
He first pursued he gently wooed,
And flying, sighing let them go,
 Weary for some delight
That may not in their beauty grow,
 Their petals argent pale
 That heavenward, earthward sail.

When Cupid knew how roses blew,
 Rose, rose red,
How deep in June they steep the noon
In orient odours, triumphing dyes—
 When love the wanderer knew,
He stooped his wing and yonder lies,
 Choosing a royal bed
 Of roses, roses red.

PLAYS



WILD JUSTICE

THE scene is laid on Ynys yr Unigdra off the Welsh coast, in the early years of the nineteenth century. The island is in an estuary and is surrounded by quicksands, except on one side, where the channel of a river, deep but not wide, divides it from a small island of rock and firm sand. The two islands are connected by a wooden footbridge. Across the mouth of the river and the greater part of the estuary runs a bar of sand, dry at low tide and covered at high. The bar is separated from Ynys yr Unigdra by a belt of quicksand, but from the smaller island, where the sands are firm, it can be easily reached at low tide. Ty Mawr is a grey, gaunt house, with straggling outbuildings. In front is a square garden with narrow paved walks, enclosed by a low stone wall; behind, some rising ground, and a wood of stunted oaks. It is separated only by a bare field from the shore, and looks out to sea over the quicksand and the bar. To the right the bay ends in a steep headland with some isolated rocks jutting out beyond it, on the largest one of which (Craig y Gwr) stands a recently built lighthouse. To the left is a wider extent of estuary, and in the distance a rocky coast backed by mountains. There are a few cottages on the island, but they are all on the other side. The action takes place principally in two rooms at Ty Mawr, both on the first floor; the great parlour and an inner room leading out of it. Both have windows towards the sea.

PERSONAGES.

GRYFFITH GWYLLIM.	OWAIN, <i>a cripple</i>	} <i>their children.</i>
MRS. GWYLLIM, <i>his wife.</i>	NELTO (ELLEN)	
	SHONNIN (JOHN)	
	A BABY	

[DAVID, LUCY, and other GWYLLIM children, who do not appear.]

SCENE I.

The inner room at Ty Mawr. NELTO rocking an oak cradle with her foot and knitting. As she rocks, she croons a ballad to herself.

THE BALLAD OF THE MOTHER

IN the dead of the night the children were weeping.
The mother heard that where she lay sleeping,
And scratched at the coffin lid.

The shrill of the lark, the scream of the owl,
The dogs that bark and the storms that howl—
She never had heard them where she lay hid,
But she heard her poor little children weeping.

In the lone of the night the sexton lay dreaming.
He turned him about : “ Who is sighing and screaming ? ”
“ O help me out, sexton, for pity, pity’s sake ! ”
“ Hush ! hush ! hush ! ”
The dead must sleep sound and never wake.”

A shimmer of wings went over the sky,
A murmur of strings : “ O pass me not by ! ”
—The poor mother wants to get out—
“ O come, help me soon ! ”
But the angels harp on ’twixt the earth and the moon.

In the dark underground the mother lay weeping,
Through the deep underground a devil was creeping.
“ Hush ! hush ! hush ! ”
What are you crying about ?
Your gravestone is carven with cherubim faces,
Your pall is enwoven with silver laces.”

"O help me, dear angel, for pity, pity's sake !
My children have wept till their hearts are like to break."
"The angels are fled, and the sexton is sleeping,
And I am a devil, a devil from Hell."

"Then help me out, devil, O help me, good devil !"
"A price must be paid to a spirit of evil.
Will you pay me the price ?" said the spirit from Hell.

"The price shall be paid, the bargain is made."
She has sworn him an oath, the coffin is broken,
The poor mother runs up the stair.

"You have sworn me an oath, but where are the pledges ?"
"My hood of white satin with Valenciennes edges,
The ring from my finger, the rose from my hair."
"No, no, no,
But a tress of your beautiful hair."

"My penknife of pearl for a last love-token
I gave my sweet William ; then how can I shear it ?"
"No need," said the devil ; "no need. I can tear it."

In the dead of the night, the moon shining brightly,
From her tomb by the church the mother rose whitely.
By the bridge o'er the stream, up the path through the
meadow,
Like a bird, like a gleam, through the wind, through the
shadow,
She ran, while the devil looked out from her tomb.
He smiles 'twixt the cherubim faces and wings,
And winds her long hair round his finger for rings.
Boom ! boom ! boom !
From the tower in the silence there sounds the great bell.
"I am fixing the price," said the devil from Hell.

Enter SHONNIN carrying books.

Nelto. Home from school already?

Shonnin [*throwing down his books*]. Where's Mother?

Nelto. The Vicar's over here to-day, and she's gone to see him.

Shonnin. What for?

Nelto. For the same reason that she went last Saturday to see our dear cousin at the Port.

Shonnin. But he's a lawyer. How can the parson help us?

Nelto. He could at least find out if there's no law in England that will help us. O Shonnin! Fancy if Mother and all of us could go away and live somewhere where we should never, never see Father again!

Shonnin. We will when I've earned money enough.

Nelto. But can we? Ah! there she is, coming in at the garden gate.

Shonnin [*leaning out of the window*]. Mother!

Mrs. Gwyllim [*from the garden*]. My child?

Nelto. Hush! Didn't you see Owain was asleep? [*Leaning out of the window*]. Come in quick, Mother, but don't wake Owain. He's asleep in the great parlour.

[*Crooning to herself.*]

In the dead of the night the children were weeping.

*The mother heard that where she lay sleeping,
And scratched at the coffin lid.*

*The shrill of the lark, the scream of the owl,
The dogs that bark, and the storms that howl—
She never had heard them where she lay hid,
But she heard her poor little children weeping.*

[*Mrs. GWYLLIM comes in.*]

Shonnin. So you've been to the parson, Mother.

Nelto. Well, what did he say?

Mrs. Gwyllim. He said I must have patience.

Nelto. Patience ! The fool !

Mrs. Gwyllim. I have had patience for one and twenty years.

Shonnin. Did he say nothing else ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. Yes. He said that Holy Matrimony is God's ordinance, and that a good wife by her meek and pious conversation should reclaim an erring husband.

Nelto. Erring ! That's good.

Shonnin. He cannot know——

Mrs. Gwyllim. What is there all the parish does not know ? But Mr. Gwyllim is a Welshman ; he speaks their own language, and drinks with them at their alehouses. Besides, the Vicar says he is a public benefactor. This lighthouse of his on Craig y Gwr will not only put money into his pocket, which they hope will overflow into theirs, but it will bring traffic to Porth Davrarch.

Nelto. The coward ! I feared he'd never dare to stir a finger against a Gwyllim.

Mrs. Gwyllim. I was a fool to go to him. I'd not have gone if there'd been anyone else to go to. But who do I know except Mr. Gwyllim's companions ? The Vicar was my last hope, and now he's failed me. O look, look ! Your father's in the garden. He's coming in. What can be the matter ?

Nelto. Something. He's shaking his fist.

Shonnin. In a black rage. But never mind, Mother ; it's me he's angry with, not you.

Mrs. Gwyllim. You ? O Shonnin, what have you been doing ? Stop here ; you must. I'll go and meet him. You'll only make it worse if you come.

Nelto. Wait, Mother, I'll come with you.

Mrs. Gwyllim. No ; not for worlds. He's coming up.

Gwyllim [without]. Mrs. Gwyllim !

Mrs. Gwyllim. He might take the baby and fling her down stairs, as he did Owain, and make a cripple of her, as he did of Owain. No—no——

Gwyllim [appearing in the doorway]. Mrs. Gwyllim !

SCENE II.

The great parlour. MR. and MRS. GWYLLIM, OWAIN in a wheeled chair by the window. The door leading into the inner room is half open, and NELTO, walking up and down there with the baby, continues to sing from time to time in a low voice, while her father is speaking.

Nelto is singing :

*In the dark underground the mother lay weeping ;
Through the deep underground a devil was creeping.*

"Hush, hush, hush !

What are you crying about ?"

Gwyllim. Answer, you sullen slut ! I'll make you answer.

What have you told the parson ? I'll inform you

What I have told him : you're an unfaithful wife.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Unfaithful ? You said that ?

Gwyllim.

Ay, so I did.

Provoke me, stare upon me with those worn

Lacklustre eyes ; I'll tell your lover's name

To who cares listen.

Nelto [stands by the open door and sings].

*"The angels are fled and the sexton is sleeping,
And I am a devil, a devil from Hell."*

Gwyllim. Damn that girl ! I'd as soon keep a parrot,

Or a piping bullfinch. Sooner ; for their necks

Were easier wrung.

[*With assumed mildness.*] Come hither, Nelto back.

[NELTO comes in.

Gwyllim [*savagely*]. I wish your neck was wrung !

[NELTO returns to the adjoining room.

Gwyllim [*to MRS. GWYLLIM*]. What ! Are you crazed ?

You rear yourself against me ?

You mean to strive with me? Conspire and whisper
Your corner treasons?—So, you Bedlamite,
You thought my lawyer cousin at Porth Davrarch—
I know you went there, I know everything—
Would turn against me, turn against a Gwyllim
For your sake? Fool, damned fool! We hate each other,
We Gwyllims, in the family; outside it
We fight for't, back to back. You've tried the Law,
And that won't touch me. Then you try the Church—
Poor Parson Jones. Ha, ha!

Nelto is singing:

“Then help me out, devil, O help me, good devil!”

“A price must be paid to a spirit of evil.

I am thinking what price,” said the spirit from Hell.

Gwyllim.

Now, do you listen,

You white-mouthed staring block. The country-side
Knows all my devil's tricks, knows 'em and likes 'em.
I'm salt and pepper to their market talk;
Besides, I'm one of them. They know I'm master
Here in this house and brook no huswife mistress;
And every man wishes himself the same.
The poor man who loves drink and wenches likes me
For being no better than himself; the other
In his hypocrite heart likes me for being worse.
I point the road to Heaven by contraries,
And certify him safely on it o' Sundays,
When soaped and shaven, shining from his tea
And bound for Chapel, plumb he meets Squire Gwyllim
Drunk as a lord and driving straight to Hell.
Hell! Let 'em scare each other white with it.
You, you're a stranger. Not a man among them
Would flick a curse across me for your sake;
No, not for your sweet sake, you withered hag,
Mother of half a score of brats, they would not.

And now such gilded glorious hopes of me
They have conceived, because each ship that passes
Drops gold into my lighthouse !

Nelto is singing :

*"The price shall be paid, the bargain is made."
She has sworn him an oath, the coffin is broken,
The poor mother runs up the stair.*

Gwyllim. What d'ye mean ?
Damn you, attend, you are my wife—my wife ;
My thing, my chattel. You dare move against me ?
By God, I am amazed ! For twenty years
You play at suffering Patience, weep and pray,
Now—understand ; you might as well be quiet.
I choose to keep you. I have married you,
I choose to keep you, Mrs. Gwyllim, keep
You and my lawful children.

Owain [muttering]. Slave-driver !

Gwyllim. Eh, hunchback ? Did I hear you muttering
there ?

[*To MRS. GWYLLIM.*] I fathom you ! That crooked im-
potence,
That infirm devil, first fruit of our love,
You make your minister. He sits to count
With seeming-aimless, calculating eye,
Sea-traffickers ; the huge East Indiaman
With level range of topsails, dancing peaks
Of snow-white schooners, giddier than girls,
And every drudging slave-black barge that crawls
Deep-laden down the coast—all, all of them
My tributaries.

[*Pushes OWAIN'S chair away from the window.*

Nelto is singing :

*"You have sworn me an oath, but where are the pledges ?"
"My hood of white satin with Valenciennes edges——"*

Gwyllim. Well, enough of counting,
You count and whisper her : " A twelvemonth more
And he'll be rich. Now is the time to strike ;
Find the fool Judge, the snivelling Advocate
That shall unyoke you, force him to disgorge
Money for all, his gold for us to enjoy
And beard him with."

Owain. What if my mother asked
Merely her money ?

Gwyllim [*striking him*]. Misbegotten toad !
[*To MRS. GWYLLIM.*] So you inform my children, I their
father
Owe you my fortune ? ' This indeed's a wife !
Some women can be loyal, though not loving ;
But that's not you.

Nelto is singing :

" *The ring from my finger, the rose from my hair.*"

" *No, no, no,*

But a tress of your beautiful hair."

What, all my fortune yours ?
Salt harvest of those uncompanioned combs
Where podded sea-weeds welter ; such a rent
As waves that leapt them for a wager paid,
Or the lean tenantry of long-necked birds
Blackening along their crests—yes, they were yours.
But the lighthouse yonder, sparkling on Craig y Gwr,
The eye, the gem of the isle—who planted that ?
Who schemed and laboured, wore the highroads out,
Scraped, mortgaged half the estate——

Owain. My mother brought him.

Gwyllim. Curse you, what did you say ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. No, do not, Owain.

You must be happier—at least less wretched
Than I, if money interests you.

Gwyllim. So !
 'There's the dumb devil out of you at last.
 Poor devil ! Quite a stranger in a woman,
 And posting back to Hell. The chattering sort,
 The scolding, whining fiends inhabit women.
 Of those you've seven apiece.

Answer me now.
 Come, find a tongue. You're growing lunatic,
 As mad as your mad daughter.

Mrs. Gwyllim. 'Tis like I am.

Gwyllim. Trust me, you're sane enough—your brain will
 serve
 To set a scheming accusation forth
 With cunning words, when 'tis against your husband.
 White, treacherous vermin ! Ay, 'twas very well
 You found no gullible fool, but Lawyer Gwyllim.
 I'll punish you for this. Not now, good madam,
 You grow too legal ; but to-night, to-night,
 You shall repent the lawyer, shall repent
 The parson ; most of all, repent your sons
 You hound upon my money.

Nelto is singing :

*" My penknife of pearl for a last love-token
 I gave my sweet William ; then how can I shear it ? "*
" No need," said the devil ; " no need. I can tear it."

Gwyllim [to OWAIN]. As for you,
 Pernicious fool, what's wealth to you ? Can money
 Put sap into those withered legs, give life
 To you, who just exist ? Come now, what would you
 Buy with my money ? Clothes ? You'd set them off
 Handsomely. Horses ? You've no knees to grip 'em.
 Drink ? It would kill you. I can take my drink,
 Three bottles, like a man. Would you buy Love ?
 'Tis saleable. Old, hideous men can buy it—

Not you. Why, damn you, miserable wretch,
What satisfaction could you buy?

Owain.

Revenge.

[GWYLLIM *laughs immoderately.*

Gwyllim. Revenge, he says. O excellent! Revenge!
A chip o' the old block yet! There's Gwyllim blood
Even in that poor carcase.

You must wait,
Young Master Gwyllim, say some thirty years.
Your grandsire lived to ninety; so shall I,
And hale and hearty too. So treasure up
Your petty wrongs, your venomous hunchback spites,
Till you have money. You'll have time to gather
A goodly store of festering injuries
Before you bury me.

Nelto sings:

In the dead of the night, the moon shining——

Gwyllim [*looking into the adjoining room*]. Shall I not be
obeyed?

Silence, you screech-owl! Ah, Shonnin is there!
Come out, boy. Tell your mother she's a fool
To make you worry me for money.

Mrs. Gwyllim.

I?

[SHONNIN *comes in from adjoining room.*

Shonnin. No, sir, 'twas not my mother. She knows
nothing.

I only wanted—Mother, I'm seventeen—
It's time I somehow went into the world.

Gwyllim. Well, go. Your brother Richard went at your
age.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Ah, you forget——

Gwyllim. Dick was blown overboard?

No, I remember it. He chose to go.
Too weak to bear a buffet from my fist

Or put an old man down, he thought to outface
The hurricane, that plucks with giant hand
Men from the close-hugged mast, as I should pluck
A caterpillar from a stalk and toss it
Carelessly forth ; so does it fling them out
Amid the tumbling heaps of confused water
And the running foam. Useless to seek them there,
So never blame the captain.

Mrs. Gwyllim. May Heaven have mercy
On my poor—all of us !

Shonnin. Please hear me, sir.
Old Rhys the schoolmaster says—perhaps he has told
you—

I am quick at books.

Gwyllim. Books !

Shonnin. There was a Scotchman staying with him not long ago, told me that at Edinburgh you can live for nothing, and get a University education so cheap the poorest people in Scotland send their sons there.

Gwyllim. The more fools they.

Shonnin. I should like to go there, sir.

Gwyllim. Well, go.

Shonnin. You don't mean—— ?

Gwyllim. To pay for you ? No, my lad. When I've got money I shall have something better to do with it than to cram your soft head with book-learning. I never had more than the parson at Porth Davrarch could give me, and at your age I was earning my own living.

Shonnin. That's what I want to do.

Gwyllim. And what I mean you to do.

Shonnin. If you'd advance enough to keep me there, sir, till I could earn something by teaching, I'd pay you back, I would, upon my honour.

Gwyllim. Would you, upon your honour ? It is high time you earned your own living, and as it happens I can find employment for you myself. Robert Roberts' son won't

stay on the lighthouse with him, the young fool ; you shall take his place there to-morrow.

Mrs. Gwyllim. } The lighthouse !
Shonnin. }

Gwyllim. Yes, sure, and a good place too. Don't I spend half the night there for my own pleasure often enough ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. Shonnin is to live there with Robert Roberts ?

Gwyllim. Yes, indeed, Mrs. Gwyllim, that he shall. Roberts has seen some life, he has. There's no man I love a drink with better. He knows his business too well to be drunk at his post, but he can carry liquor enough to set a man-o'-war's crew reeling. An excellent fellow, Robert Roberts.

Shonnin. Pray, sir, don't try to send me to the lighthouse, for I warn you I shan't go.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Hush, Shonnin.

Owain. Bravo !

Gwyllim [*divesting himself of his coat and laying a gold watch with seals on the table*]. There's a rule in my family, John Gwyllim ; you mayn't have heard of it. When a son of mine is man enough to knock me down, I'll give him some money to go out into the world with, but not before. Try, now, try. It's true your brother Richard couldn't do it, though he had twice your chest ; but that was two years ago. I'm past sixty now ; getting an old man, you think. [*Laughs and thrusts his fist into SHONNIN's face.*] Come, knock me down, I say, and I'll give you fifty, a hundred pounds to-morrow. If you can't, why I knock you down, and to-morrow you go to the lighthouse, or to the devil, as you damn please. Come on. Why don't you come on ? I'm making no defence.

Shonnin. Mother ?

Gwyllim. Leave her alone. Strike me, boy. I bid you do it.

Shonnin. Then I will ; with all my might, and may God increase it !

Oswain. There is no God.

[SHONNIN strikes his father.

Gwyllim [laughs]. Again, boy, again. I'll give you three times.

[SHONNIN strikes him twice again.

Gwyllim. That's the best you can do, is it? And you call yourself a man and want my money. I'll show you the difference between you and a man. [Strikes SHONNIN, who falls with his head against a piece of oak furniture. MRS. GWYLLIM rises, as though to go to him.] Go and pick up her baby boy, and kiss the place to make it well! [She sits down.] Am I never to have a man for a son? Well, indeed I may have, but he'll be none of yours. As for this pretty thing [touching SHONNIN with his foot], it's plain he's your son; and plain too he's not mine.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Shame!

Gwyllim. Whose shame? It's just eighteen years since I first planned that lighthouse, and the young engineer, Ed——

Mrs. Gwyllim. Hush!

Gwyllim. So you don't like me to tell your children that Edward Liston was here eighteen years ago? [Putting on his coat.] Enough of this wrangling and jangling; I'll have no more of it. A pleasant thing truly, were I to be tied down to the company of an old withered shrewish wife and a pack of undutiful children. You, Shonnin, take the boat round to the bar for me when the tide serves. I shall go to the lighthouse this evening. Mrs. Gwyllim, bring me my supper in the library. Now mind, no damned treason while I'm away, or it'll be the worse for somebody.

[Goes out. NELTO comes in slowly, carrying the baby, and singing. While singing she puts it down in the oak cradle by the fire, and goes to the door by which GWYLLIM has gone out.

Nelto sings:

*In the dead of the night, the moon shining brightly,
From her tomb by the church the mother rose whitely.*

*By the bridge o'er the stream, up the path through the meadow,
Like a bird, like a gleam, through the wind, through the shadow,
She ran, while the devil looked out from her tomb.*

*He smiles 'twixt the cherubim faces and wings,
And winds her long hair round his finger for rings.*

Boom ! boom ! boom !

From the tower in the silence there sounds the great bell.

"I am fixing the price," said the devil from Hell.

Nelto. He's gone.

Owain. You're sure ?

Nelto. I heard the stairs creak.

Owain. Look.

*[She opens the door, looks out, and shuts it again, making a
sign that no one is there.]*

Mrs. Gwyllim. It was a lie, a foul remorseless lie,
And I accepted it. Children, 'tis false.

Will they believe him ? On my soul he's mad.

Children, you do not ?

Nelto. Of course not, mother.

Shonnin. My dearest mother, no.

Owain. Well, for my part

I'm sorry 'tis not true. What, always faithful

To Caliban ? O poor, poor, poor Miranda !

Mrs. Gwyllim. Owain ? What do you say ?

Owain. Mother, forgive me !

If I talk lightly 'tis because I mean

You should not blush, for here indeed's no cause.

If there's a crime, a folly you should blush for,

'Tis to have married, loved then I suppose,

The monster we call father.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Loved him ? I ?

Alas ! I never did. It's horrible

To speak such naked truths to you, our children ;

I know, but cannot feel it. I'm degraded

By my much misery past proper feeling.

Owain. We never had it. Why should we pay toll
Of thought or speech to an injurious world
Which makes a slavery for us far profounder
Than that of slaves ?

Nelto. They say that Love is blind.
If 'twas not Love, what other eyeless madness
On the wide earth could drive you——

Mrs. Gwyllim. It was Honour——
Honour, that heaven-white star which stooped from heaven
To play the Jack-o'-lantern. If much wrong
My grandsire did the Gwyllims, taking Ty Mawr,
It has been much avenged. I thought he loved me.
Heaven be my witness I was not unworthy
Once to be loved : a young maid, innocent,
And beautiful.

Nelto. If I had had such beauty
And one defaced it, I should count that up
Among my bitterest wrongs.

Owain. Yet are there bitterer.

Nelto. O mother, think ! Have you not anywhere
Friends who would help us ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. No. There's no one left.
I had so few. Mostly they're dead, and all
He in his cunning violence quarrelled with
Past reconciliation. I have got no friends.

Owain. The net is closely meshed ; yet surely, surely,
Did I not lie here a chained prisoner,
I'd find the means to tear it.

You, John Gwyllim,
What are you good for ? Have you no man's blood
In your body, laid there at your mother's knee,
To tingle at a blow, to shoot you upright——
As I shall never be—and make you swear
There shall be vengeance, shall be liberty
For her, for all of us ?

I talk foolishly.

Shonnin. I'm ready to do anything. Just tell me What I can do.

Owain. Oh, nothing, nothing, nothing !
Anne's practically dead, Richard is dead,
I have been dead—when was my birthday ?—dead
These twenty years. Die ; for it's your turn next.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Don't say that, Owain.

Nelto. No, you've left me out.
It's my turn next, and I don't mean to die ;
At least not die before I've lived. To die !
Oh, 'tis a shocking thing to die, die young,
Be suddenly thrust on cold, remorseless Death—
Poor Dick ! Don't think of it——

Mrs. Gwyllim. I needs must think,
Anne, Richard, Shonnin now—yes, all my children
As by some hungry monster, one by one
Are plucked from out my bosom. Owain is left,
My poor, poor Owain left.

[*She approaches OWAIN, who motions her away.*

Owain. I cannot bear it.
When others weep they've leave to hide their tears.
Grant me so much of manhood. Come, come, Nelto,
Take me away—alone——

[*NELTO wheels his chair into the adjoining room.*

Mrs. Gwyllim. O my dear Shonnin,
What fatal freak was this ? My heart's a stone,
Or I'd be sorry for it. So you'll go,
You too. Why pull down fate upon your head ?
Anne's in a mad-house ; you'll be in a dungeon,
With Roberts for a gaoler.

Shonnin. Don't fear that.
I'm not going to the lighthouse.

Mrs. Gwyllim. So you say.
We all say that sometimes : " I will " or " will not."
'Tis empty arrogance. When the whip cracks
The slave falls into line, and does or does not

Just as his master chooses.

Shonnin.

No, not always.

You are a woman, mother ; I'm a man.

Mrs. Gwyllim. At seventeen, my beloved ?

Shonnin.

Yes, from to-day.

My father's made me one.

Mrs. Gwyllim.

A man, a man !

You must be more not to fear Gryffith Gwyllim.

Shonnin. And I do fear him ; know he has the strength
To strike me dead, the will too, could he do it
And keep the wind of the law.

Mrs. Gwyllim.

Mine's a worse fear.

I fear not death—why should I ?—but I fear
Him because he's himself.

Shonnin.

I've that fear too.

Mother, a man may fear, but being a man
He catches Fear by the throat, and says, "Not thou
But I am master."

Mrs. Gwyllim. You can't resist him. He could carry you
Easily, like a child.

Shonnin.

Yes, if he caught me,
But he shall never do it ; my plans are laid.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Come, tell me your projects.

Shonnin. The captain of the "Wave" sails from Porth
Davrarch

For Liverpool to-morrow. 'Tis a promise
I sail aboard her.

Mrs. Gwyllim. What, you go to sea !

You be a sailor too, when even Richard—
Richard—For God's sake ! No, you shall not, Shonnin.
Listen ; I forbid you.

Shonnin.

Why, so the Captain would.
He holds me cheap as you do. Mother mine,
My plans are different. I'll to Manchester ;
There, 'mid the flying shuttles and great wheels
That Fortune turns, to take my chance of Fortune.

Mrs. Gwyllim. My little Shonnin, he that loves his book,
A common mill-hand ?

Shonnin. Yes, and a scholar, too.
I shall live hard, save half my earnings, spend
Nothing on pleasure-seeking. So I'll save
Enough to go to Edinburgh.

Mrs. Gwyllim. No, never.
You never will. Why, it's the maddest plan.
You'll simply starve and die there, and your mother,
Your wretched mother won't even know you're dead.

Shonnin. Tell me a better plan.

Mrs. Gwyllim. She'll only guess it.
There are dreams enough to haunt the roaring nights
And bring ill tidings, when the dark's all voices,
A clamour as of lamentable things
Climbing up from the shore and swooping seawards,
All clashing round Ty Mawr. Horrible voices—
Groans, sudden cries, and long, long doleful stories
The ear pursues, waiting the imminent words,
Until they whine and witter down to nothing.
Yet they're distinct enough. There's one that whispers,
Waving the ghost-white curtains. "Hush ! I've seen it.
It's hanging now deep down amid the seaweed.
It sways in the dim water like the seaweed,
The hair and long lax limbs ; the tranquil fishes
Swim under, feed, and swim." And that was Richard.

Shonnin. O mother, don't ! Think he's in Heaven.

Mrs. Gwyllim. He may be.
He's drowned, at any rate. Another voice
Talks at the corner of the house. "What ! warm ?
It's cold in the cell. Don't you remember her ?
You used to hear her pitter-patter feet
On the passage floor, and open half awake
Your arms for the soft chill thing to creep into
And warm herself o' nights. It's cold in the cell.
I've seen her there. She's whimpering in the dark

Because she dares not scream. Her hair's cut short,
Her nails are grown. She's starved, unkempt, and ragged.
She has no mother." That's my daughter Anne.

Shonnin. Mother, you are not yourself. These shocking
fancies
Are themselves madness.

Mrs. Gwyllim. My lovely, delicate Anne!

Shonnin. 'Twas terror turned her brain—the daily terror
Of him. She's better far away, and doubtless
They're kind to her; they surely must be kind
To your pretty Anne.

Mrs. Gwyllim. They may be; but who knows?
Shonnin, for my sake—see, I beg and pray you,
Don't leave me now. Indeed, I cannot bear it;
I've borne so much. Shonnin, indeed, you know not
Just what you are to me. Dear, twice beloved—
Flower of my heart. Shonnin my son, my best,
See how in my exceeding selfishness
I hang on you, implore, and supplicate
You will not, will not leave me.

Shonnin. My sweet mother,
What can I do? Consider; there's no choice.
I must escape, else be endungeoned yonder
At the lighthouse. Either way we're separated,
As well by one strait channel of stormy sea
As by a hundred miles.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Nay, not so far.
Sometimes you'd surely come. Oh, not so far,
For I should see your nightly vigilant flame
Through the dead hours when nothing seems alive
Except myself; see it through all the nights
I must keep watch to please his devilish humour.
Indeed, I want you there.

Shonnin. Mother, you are strange,
And different from yourself. You'd have me waste
My youth, my hopeful, all-containing youth

A vacant prisoner ? Better to die.

Mrs. Gwyllim. A very little while ; just a reprieve,
Then I'll have courage.

Shonnin. Courage, courage now !
You've had so much. Now comes the push of fate ;
No other moment's good. Were I once captured
Escape were mere conjecture. Now at most
'Tis hazard, and that favourable. Mother,
I will return, I never will forget.
Do I not love you ? Ay, but you want help,
What help is here for any of us ? Away,
I'll surely find it. Dearest soul, take heart.
I'll write——

Mrs. Gwyllim. What use ? I never get my letters.

Shonnin. At least you'll guess I'm working for you.

Who knows !

I may discover sudden stairs to fortune
In Manchester. Men once as poor as I
Walk the streets now, their pockets stuffed with gold.
Think of that, mother.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Oh, I'll think of it !
Mad boy, upon my word you make me smile
Who cannot weep !

Ay, some men do grow rich,
But you're not one of them. The man, my *Shonnin*,
Born to be rich, makes of such bones as yours
Grist for his mill.

[*NELTO comes in from the adjoining room, leaving
the door open.*

Shonnin. Well, mother, laugh at me,
But let me go.

Nelto. Mother, indeed he must ;
Go anyhow, go anywhere. You cannot
Wish otherwise, I think.

Mrs. Gwyllim. No, I suppose not.
What can I find to wish ? [Stands at the window.

How the tide eddies
 Over the engulfed quicksand ! I remember
 Hearing of one who blundered on it by chance,
 Taking it for firm land. He stood quite still
 Shrieking for help ; began to sink and struggled
 Sank all the faster, so was quiet again,
 Yet sank and shrieked and sank—then one wild horror
 Of choking cries and battling arms—then nothing
 To see but bubbles. The island's all one quicksand.
 I sink, and sink—and live.

Nelto. And while there's life
 There's hope, too.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Hope ?

Shonnin. I swear you shall have succour
 If I'm alive. Patience, my dearest mother ;
 Wait you in patience, sister,
 Your brothers won't forget.

Nelto. How wait in patience ?
 I doubt I've not a genius for it. Wait ?
 Had you said " Fly ! "

Shonnin. You'd be the very bird
 Were you a boy.

Nelto. Sometimes a girl has wings.

Shonnin. A husband finds them for her. Find the
 husband.

Nelto. On Ynys yr Unigdra ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. 'Tis impossible.
 My daughters cannot marry. No honest men
 Come to Ty Mawr.

Nelto. Is there no way but marriage ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. Would that there were, my love ! Alas,
 what way ?

Nelto. Mother, do you mean
 That I'm to wither out my whole sweet youth
 Here at Ty Mawr, waiting while indolent Fortune
 Shuffles my brother's cards ? Oh, never, never !

There's Lucy growing tall, there's little Gwen ;
They can supply my place. They're young, they've time ;
But I'm eighteen, next year nineteen, and next
Out of my teens. O Mother, one grows old
So terribly soon, and youth—youth's all we've got,
We women ! Don't you see I *must* go ?

Shounin.

Where ?

How can you go ?

Mrs. Geyllim. I would to God you could.
Have I not beat my brains a million times
Seeking some way for you ?

Nelto.

But I have found it.

I might have gone last May. If he returns—
He swore he should return——

Mrs. Geyllim.

Who is this he ?

No gentleman, for never such comes hither.
Surely my Nelto has not given her heart——

Nelto. To a drunken quarryman, a scheming clerk,
Or any other Williams, Parry, or Jones
Foots this delectable island. No, my heart,
My heart's my own. Yet, 'tis a luxury
I can't afford.

Shounin.

Mother, don't waste your terrors.
Nelto fools seriously, yet never could be
Too serious to fool.

Nelto.

Do you know this song ?

[Sings]

*Winged Love's a rover,
Where'er he may fly,
Young hearts must follow ;
Then kiss me good-bye.*

*Fleet Love, O sweet Love,
He came but for this—
Greeting and parting,
A smile and a kiss.*

Shonnin. Why, the sailors sang it aboard the Italian ship that anchored in the bay last Spring. What of it!

Nelto. Do you remember meeting the sailors as we were coming from church one Sunday?

Shonnin. Yes, very well. They were bursting with admiration of our Nelto's beauty.

Nelto. And you were all bursting with laughter at their admiration. Before that I had always believed you when you said I was ugly. However, the Captain was not there that day.

Mrs. Gwyllim. The Captain? Where did you meet him?

Nelto. On the shore. Not very often, but often enough.

Mrs. Gwyllim. What sort of man is he? Did he make you an offer?

Nelto. He is—handsome, I suppose. He offered—to take me away with him. He said I was too fine a girl and sang too sweetly to be buried alive in this horrible country.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Did he offer you marriage?

Nelto. He told me he adored me, and that Italy was beautiful as Paradise.

Mrs. Gwyllim. But you did not go. Thank God for that!

Nelto. I should have gone if he had not made love to me; that was intolerable. But, Mother, other things become still more intolerable. If he comes again I shall go.

Mrs. Gwyllim. My child, for God's sake, hush! You don't know what you're talking about.

Nelto. I know. It means dishonour.

Mrs. Gwyllim. My innocent child, my poor unhappy Nelto! You do not, do not know. Promise me.

Nelto. And if I promise you, what can you promise me? Could I choose any lot for myself more miserable than the lot you chose for yourself?

Shonnin. Shame, Nelto! My mother gave up all for honour, and you would give up honour.

Nelto. A slave can have no honour.

Shonnin. If ever your damnable foreigner comes this way again, I'll——

Mrs. Gwyllim. Hush, Shonnin ; let us hear no more on the subject. And Nelto will promise me [*putting her hands on Nelto's shoulders*], Nelto, you will promise me to forget——

Nelto. Never to forget you, my own, own mother. I'll promise nothing more.

[*The mother and daughter look at each other silently.*

Then MRS. GWYLLIM looses NELTO slowly, and, falling on her knees by the table, buries her face in her hands.

Mrs. Gwyllim. O merciful God !

How often have I prayed ; 'Look on our sufferings ;

See, Lord, our mortal griefs.' Thou wouldst not hear me.

Now must I pray ; 'Look Thou upon our sins.'

We are left too long in hell, our hearts grow hellish,

Immortal wrongs are heaped upon our souls.

See ; we grow wicked one by one ; I first,

Owain, this girl—we shudder at ourselves.

Save us, good Lord ! Have mercy on their souls,

Mercy—— [*Her voice fails in sobs. SHONNIN and NELTO throw their arms round her.*]

SCENE III.

The inner room. Two windows look out to sea, one across the bay to distant mountains. OWAIN in his chair, NELTO mending clothes by the window.

Nelto [*singing*].

Sleep we must, but when to slumber ?

Every hour's too fair to choose it,

Morn of gold and eve of umber,

Silver night—Ah, who would lose it ?

Honey's hid in every flow'r,

Joy in every sweet, sweet hour.

*Sleep we shall, but first be weary,
Dance with hours of morning gladness,
Pillage noon nor chide the dreary
Hours that weave delightful madness,
Round the earth that's with us racing,
Sun and moon and meteors chasing ;
Worn with journeys, white with dust,
Then we'll sleep—for sleep we must.*

Owain. The boisterous Winter's long outstayed his term.
See how the powdered snow pricks out the lean
Anatomy of the hills, their toothed spines
And skeleton ribs ; colourless, lifeless, old,
Old as the hills.

Nelto. April—and then comes May.

Owain. I warrant the inheriting Spring blows a brave
horn

Somewhere through flush green fields and sprinkled woods.
Stark Winter holds him out. Fierce cecity
Of the grey tyrant ! There's his grip on us,
So long endured he thinks it must endure.
Madman ! 'Tis certain he must loose at last,
Then why not now ? 'Tis certain he must die ;
Let him die now—or live for ever.

Nelto. To-day

I took my summer clothes out of the closet ;
They're all blue mould.

Owain. What else do you expect ?
Everything moulders at Ty Mawr, ourselves
Included.

Shonnin [*coming in*]. Nelto, will you make my bundle ?
The "Wave" goes out on the ebb to-morrow morning,
And I with her.

Nelto. But, O unlucky day !
The fishermen's boats from the other side the island
Are sailing out—see, one, two, three black sails.

Old Williams knocked a hole yesterday night
In our smaller boat ; so now on all Unigdra
There's just one craft, and that the one my father
Will take to Craig y Gwr.

Owain. What ? What do you say ?
The fishermen gone ? No other boats ?

Shonnin. That's bad.
I dare not meet my father. Will you go
To the bar to-night, then bring the boat to harbour ?
I will be there. Pray Heaven he may return
From the lighthouse early ! I must speed to gain
The port in time.

Nelto. O you are fleet enough !
Yes, you must go. But is it farewell for ever,
Old Shonnin ?

Shonnin. No, believe me I'll return.

Owain. When ?
Shonnin. When I have gained the power to help you.

Owain. Ah !
Shonnin. Come, Owain, Owain, man ! Wish me good luck !

I mayn't succeed, but if I fail, by Heaven
It shall not be because this Hell behind me,
Wherein you sit and suffer, is unremembered.
And God will surely——

Owain. Help. Ay, cry aloud !
Perchance the Almighty sleeps or He pursues
Some maned star, leaping prodigiously
Forth from a lair of suns. I'm sick of God.

Shonnin. Ill-omened words. Find better, as you love
me——

I think you do—to speed me on this road.
Owain, your hand. I would you saw my heart ;
It cannot find the words. I know I know not
Half what you suffer. To mitigate your pain,
To save my mother, Nelto, all from bondage
In grey T'y Mawr, I'd give—what would I not ?

I'd give my heart, my life——

Owain.

Would you give your soul ?

Shonnin. What do you mean ?

Owain.

I mean that if my soul

Had legs to carry it, it should this night

Have rushed upon damnation. That for her sake,

Yours, mine, everyone's sake.

Shonnin [to *NELTO*].

What does he mean ?

Nelto. I cannot guess. *Owain*, how pale you look !

Shall we not leave you ? Will you sleep ?

Owain.

For ever,

If so I could. Why did I say damnation ?

The thing's a fraud ; yet were it otherwise

I would encounter it. I say if I could walk,

Stand but six hours, reach anyhow the means,

Knife, bullet, poison—I would kill my father

Like a mad dog.

Shonnin.

Hush, *Owain*, you would not.

Owain. I say I would. A dangerous lunatic !

His wickedness amounts to madness. She,

Our mother, holds him mad. Well, shut him up.

Nelto. No one would do it. Sober, yes or drunk,
He's sane enough in business.

Owain.

Sane enough

In the head but mad at heart. No, yet not so ;

Such madness mounts. He cannot estimate

Debit and credit here. He overdraws ;

That's some men's mania. Were it but his money

He fancied inexhaustible, why then

They'd clap him in a cell with no more scruple

Than his poor victim Anne. But on human souls

He draws, on flesh and blood. The coward world

Protects such madmen, the obsequious Priest

Sets bogies up to fright into submission

Their recalcitrant slaves ; God—His mysterious Will.

I have a God, a God to whom I appeal

Unawed, an essence above all modes, an element
Not to be dissolved in the limbec—I mean Justice.

Shonnin. Justice is my God too, for God is Justice.

But you mean nothing,

I know, by talk like this. Nelto means nothing
By talk about the foreign fellow.

Nelto.

I mean

Just what I said.

Owain. What now ? What have you said ?

Again the Italian ? And you'll go ? No, sister,
Not to dishonour. Think, you have a mother
To die of your disgrace.

Nelto.

She cannot die.

She's cursed to live, and who may comfort her ?

Owain, there's a mad hurry in my veins—

My father's blood—to-day 'tis mirth and music,

To-morrow 'tis what time and misery make it.

Oh, there's no comfort in me ! Let me go ;

I were better gone.

Owain.

Shonnin, do you hear that ?

How many years, supposing you successful,

Must this beleaguered city of souls hold out

Before there's hope of succour ? Say, ten years,

Ten at the soonest. Why, that's far too late.

Mother'll be dead, Nelto be lost, dishonoured.

Shonnin. No ; I will not believe it.

Owain.

Your beliefs

Are comfortable. David in ten years—

Where will he be ? Lucy's a patient creature ;

She'll wait and wait and wait, till she's transformed

From flesh to dull grey marble. For myself,

You may say to-morrow were too late, to-day

Alike too late. Yet even I have claims

Can righteously demand scope, satisfaction

For the intellectual being, sole surviving

Of all that should be life, that might have been

Abundant life, in this foul half-animate
 Mis-shapen body. Look on me, John Gwyllim,
 And ask yourself, what has this monster done—
 Steeped in a woman's tears, red from the winepress
 Of warm out-trampled hearts, what has he done
 That he should live, and live to be the ruin,
 The horror and despair of unhelped creatures
 Crude Law and shameless Nature yield him ?

Shonnin.

Nothing ;

But then I have done nothing to deserve
 To be made a parricide.

Owain.

What do you fear ?

Night after night, or morning after morning—
 That varying hour's just his malignant way
 To keep my mother watching, some one waiting
 Sleepless upon the shore—night after night
 I hear him stumbling up the stair half drunk,
 Three-quarters drunk, and then I ask myself,
 Does God work miracles, that this drunken man,
 Walking yon dangerous shore, never mistakes ?
 Never sets foot upon that bottomless quicksand,
 Which should he tread it—well, there were an end.
 And the clear morn, lifting long lids of cloud
 Over the sea, would laugh on a clean world.

Shonnin. Consider no such accident. The lamp
 My mother trims in the casement is most visible
 Even from the wet edge of the lowest tide.
 The stretched sands the further side the river
 Are solid enough, for all they look as slopped,
 As slimy with the salt and slippery weed
 As the hither perilous shore. The lantern waits him
 Always on the bar, that side the river's mouth.
 The bar ! What boisterous shivering nights I've paced it !
 Lain, too, in summer, under a yellow moon,
 Soft on the fine sand, gathering small pink shells
 Like sea-nymphs' finger nails. No more of that.

David must——

Owain. Do you think the lantern guides him
When he steers homewards ?

Shonnin. That doubtless, and the lamp
High in Ty Mawr.

Owain. It were an easy thing—
And easier yet to close that single eye
Of light in dark Ty Mawr—an easy thing
To let your flitting lantern leap the river
And stop this side. If he should land this side,
Were it not dangerous, mortal dangerous ?
The quicksand would say nothing.

Shonnin. Horrible !
How dare you, Owain—but I'm very simple
To take you seriously ! When I turn murderer
I'll devise something rare. Your plan's absurd,
Impracticable.

Owain. Why impracticable ?
Nothing of note was ever practicable
Till it was done. He who vouchsafes not Fortune
Her part in his game, has Fortune for his foe.
Pshaw ! 'Tis beside the mark, since you are purposed
In your most sanctified selfishness to depart
Leaving us in our quicksand.

Shonnin. What I purpose
You are informed. This shall not be farewell,
Yet I were best begone. Did the master see me,
Who knows, this very night I were impounded
In the lighthouse ? David must bring round the boat.

Nelto. I'll meet it on its return.

Shonnin. Thanks. That were best.
You have often been before ; he'll notice nothing.

Owain. *Shonnin*, one moment, stay. He'll not, he's
gone—

And still so much to urge ! I wanted judgement,

I was too violent. Yet an angel's tongue
 Had not persuaded him. I might have touched
 At least upon the difference, all the difference,
 'Twould make to him. Oh, he would never heed !
 Yet Nelto, you, I, anyone that knows
 The metal of his mind, cannot expect
 Success for him in a machine-made world,
 Where men perforce work like machinery
 Grinding against each other. He wants learning ;
 The temperate atmosphere, the cloistered calm
 Where learning flowers, were native to him.

Nelto.

You know

Schoolmaster says were he but given the chance——

Owain. Go, impress that——

Nelto.

Quite useless !

Owain.

Right. At least

He will have freedom, he has hope. My Nelto,
 This stiff-necked righteousness "doth something smack,
 Doth something grow to" common selfishness.
 Sooner than wear a stain, an importune
 Discomfortable stain upon his soul,
 He'll heave us to perdition. But consider,
 Prejudice apart, how stands the real account ?
 This modern minotaur, half brute, half tyrant,
 Who stands convicted out of his own mouth
 Of devilish cruelties to man, beast, ay
 To wife and children, whom he maims and tortures
 For pleasure ; this mean plunderer of a woman,
 This—what in every answering nerve you know him—
 Society protects. Society
 That strings up starved wretches by the score
 For paltry thefts, sends by the waggon-load
 Poor whimpering boys and girls to load the gallows
 With puny bones. Does the judge dream o' nights ?
 Does the worm Conscience wither in his bloom
 The purple juryman ? No ; yet if one should rid

The earth of this notorious old mad villain,
 He were deemed blood-guilty. Did I do the deed
 'Twould leave a snaky something in my soul
 Not to be reasoned with, a venomous head
 To stir and threat i' the dark ; yet—yet I'd do it,
 And do it again. Once for the immediate good,
 Twice for bare Justice, thrice for my revenge.
 Revenge, revenge! He, he 'twas huddled up
 All appetites, all aims into that span,
 Pressed in and welded them. What! flesh and blood
 Turn to hard steel? Ay, that's his chemistry.
 Wake, Nelto! Have I reasoned you to sleep,
 Or are you praying for deliverance? Wake,
 Either way. Let us read. Find me the book
 Of the wise Verulam, where he speaks well
 About Revenge.

Nelto. Owain, of all our lives
 Whose is the worst? Whose the least valuable?

Owain. Mine.

Nelto. But mine next.

Owain. Why yours?

Nelto. Look at it, brother.

I do sometimes, and all's far too distinct,
 Like the long coast before the rain—bare, cheerless,
 Monotonous year following monotonous year,
 Myself at end of them, a body and soul
 Too withered even for pity.

Owain. Yes—yes—yes.

Nelto. Well, I can't bear it. I choose exile, shame,
 I know not what I choose, but 'tis life, life,
 Not living burial. Yet I fear 'tis ugly
 And miserable. O why mayn't one be happy?
 Owain, are you sure I never shall be happy?

Owain. Sure.

Nelto. I want to be so much.

Owain. You cannot be.

A sailor's strumpet, flung at the first port
Into—Good God!

Nelto. So little makes me glad.
Fresh flowers, ripe strawberries, the first fine day
Set my blood capering. There in the brown dusk,
Under the orange moon, out of dim warmth
Music will flutter and fall, a crowded thrumming
Of mellow strings, laughter o'ertakes; the curve
Of the marbled quays and palaces hangs hushed
In a translucency, half sky, half sea.
The stars drown under them. Shall I not sing
To such music, laugh in such a——

Owain. You may laugh.
You'll not be happy.

Nelto. Shall I not? Why not?
Owain. Shame, horror of yourself, the strong remembrance
Of your mother, all your heart clings to——

Nelto. I know it.
To what will you drive me?

[She goes to the bookshelf and passes her hand along the books, as though looking for one. Presently begins singing to herself:]

*O wind that farest
Afar and barest
Beyond the streaming
Of storms the gleaming
Of one red star.*

*[Takes down a book and opens it.
Whichever way accursed?*

[Turns the leaves slowly, singing:]

*Beyond the streaming
Of storms the gleaming—
The strong wind caught it,
The wild wind brought it*

Out through the thunder
Of surf and under—

[Flings the book on to the table.]

Owain, I will do it.

Owain. You will do what ?

Nelto. The thing you would have done.

Owain. Who asked you ? Who ?

Who set that in your book ? Not I—not I !

There are many things I would have done. Be plain.

What do you mean ?

Nelto. I mean the thing you mean.

Owain. Him ? To—to—— ?

Nelto. Ay.

Owain. You'll swear that ?

Nelto. I will do it.

Owain. By God, you'll not. You're jesting.

Nelto. Jestings ? I ?

Look at me, Owain.

Owain. Brave, splendid sister !

You'll do it. But no, by Heaven, you shall not dare !

You are a girl. No ! Never drag this horror

Down to the eternal mansion of your soul.

'Twould take a man to bed with that o' nights

And say, " We'll sleep : " to taste that in his meat

And still be hungry. If this deed be done

Let a man do it.

Nelto. Who ? Where is the man ?

Owain. David—or Lewis——

Nelto. Children ! Shall we all wait ?

David a fool too.

Owain. O that I were a man !

Nelto. You are and are not. Accept necessity,

And with few words.

Owain. It is not in the act.

'Twere easily accomplished—

Nelto. Show me how.

Owain. 'Tis the ugly horror climbing out of it.

Nelto. Let's to the core of the matter.

Shall I for nothing

Endure much evil, or for sufficient cause?

Owain. Consider, Nelto——

Nelto. Enough considered. Here's your instrument :

Use it or lose it. What! Do you think that I—

I do not hate him too?

Owain.

O rarely, rarely!

Nelto. How is the moon to-night?

Owain.

At one o'clock

She's down. At three the tide sweeps round the bar.

Whoop over! Then you know in a trice it's up.

Across the level.

Nelto.

Well?

Owain.

The shrimp-fishers

From the long sands the further side the stream

Sometimes, at slack tide, wade across the bar

At the river's mouth.

Nelto.

It can be done.

Owain.

'Tis venturesome :

For should they linger till half tide they're caught.

They cannot cross again?

Nelto.

If they're strong swimmers.

Owain. He cannot swim. A quicksand cuts them off

From shore, and the sea mounts upon the bar.

[The door leading into the adjoining room moves slightly.]

Nelto. Ah! What's that?

Owain.

Nothing. The door creaked.

Nelto. Is it open?

Owain.

It was left ajar.

[NELTO, who is kneeling by his chair, half rises.]

No, no—

The room is empty. Listen, Nelto. The bar

Runs level either side the river mouth.

The same straight sand, the same tide-trampled rocks

Bank from the sea. Might not a sober man,
Steering for an accustomed light—eh, sister?—
On a so cloud-enmeshed and wolf-dark planet
As ours will be ere morn—a sober man
Land on the dangerous side, and not discover
His error till too late? That is supposing
The light misplaced. To-night you carry it?

Nelto. Yes. He will not be sober.

Owain. Can you wade
Across the river?

Nelto. I have done it for sport.

Owain. What is to fear, should he discover in time,
But blows and curses? We get those every day
For nothing.

Nelto. What should I say?

Owain. Make an excuse.

Nelto. A lie?

Owain. Of course.

Nelto. I cannot.

Owain. Ah! you stick at lying?

Nelto. 'Twould be ridiculous. But what to say?

I have no invention for excuses.

Owain. Say

You wearied waiting for him. Don't we all know
Patience is not your gift? Say that you waded
Across the river for sport, and, the tide rising,
Return became impossible. It will be.
Think of that, *Nelto*.

Nelto. I am not afraid.

He'll come about half tide. But if all goes well,
If he should land observing nothing——?

Owain. Let him.

When he's ashore, then quick into the boat,
Push out, push out for your life; don't look or listen.
Land where you will, and let the boat drift. Then
Come home. The quicksand covers all.

Nelto.

If he——

Owain. In twenty paces he's in it, and, if not—
The vigilant tide will see to it.

Nelto.

Horrible !

Owain. Ay, this may wear the loathed mask of murder :
Remember, it is Justice. 'Tis despair
For one man, brief despair, for the rest long hope.

Nelto. Yes ; but I—Oh, I'll go and perish with him !
I could not live to dream of it.

Owain.

You die ?

Nelto. Yes, I had rather.

Owain.

But you shall not, Nelto ;

Not without me. Mine be the expiation,
If death be so. No, life be arbitrator,
Condemn or justify. Sister, unurged
Of me beat round the compass of this question.
When you decide, why, let it be decision,
Not inclination. Meanwhile our grand accomplice
Steals greyly down the shore.

Bring me his watch ;

It lies on the parlour-table. I'll reset it
Slow by a quarter, so there'll be less hazard
Of his return while the river's fordable.
Thus I, the first, move in our enterprise,
And thus will seal with devout hands a compact
That must attend your hand. The sin be mine
And the repentless sea's.

Bring me the watch.

[NELTO opens the door into the next room, and sees MRS.

GWYLLIM there.

Nelto. Ah ! Mother !

Mrs. Gwyllim.

The watch—give me the watch.

Nelto. The—the watch ?

Mrs. Gwyllim.

Your father's. He sent me for it.

Nelto [pointing to the table]. It is there. [Touching MRS.
GWYLLIM's hand.] What's that ? You've blood on your hand.

Owain [*calling*]. Bring me the watch.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Does it still bleed? His food was not to his liking.

He broke his glass on my hand.

Nelto. Yes, Owain.

[*Taking up the watch.*]

Mrs. Gwyllim [*catching her hand*]. No—let me have it.

[*GWYLLIM is heard shouting below stairs.*]

Owain. Quick!

Nelto. Mother, for Shonnin's sake—

Owain. We must delay him.

[*Mrs. GWYLLIM lets NELTO pass through to OWAIN.*]

Owain. All explanations after. Damn the key!

[*Setting back the hands and reclosing it.*]

So, Nelto! There's my seal set to the bond.

[*GWYLLIM comes in.*]

Gwyllim. You devil's drab, bring me my watch, I say!

My watch! Look at the tide, you bat-eyed fool.

It's down from the bar. When it's below the rocks

No getting aboard dry-shod.

[*To OWAIN who holds up the watch.*] You've my watch?

Curse you, how dare you touch it?

Owain. I've used it, sir.

Only to seal a—something, like a Gwyllim.

Gwyllim. Letters? Who dares have letters in my house,

Except myself? I will not pay hard money

For senseless trash. I loathe your modern nonsense,

Newspapers and letters. I had none of them

When I was a boy.

Owain. To whom, sir, should I write?

Or who to me? This matter which I sealed

Was but a trifling jest, a bond for sport

'Twixt Nelto and myself.

Gwyllim [*putting on his watch*]. I must be off.

But look you, Owain, you devil, I dislike you.

You stuff your brain with books. The doddering fool

That owned Ty Mawr before, left you too many.
Bess shall make fuel of them.

Mrs. Gwyllim,
Your girl's dismissed. I'll have no maid who talks
Against her master. I've engaged Bess Owen
The hawker's daughter : she's the buxom fresh
Free-smiling lass for me. Sit up till I come,
Keep the lamp trimmed and have a foot-bath ready,
And the water warm. If you were fresh and buxom,
Not sallow, thin, hagged past the years you bear,
I would not spoil your bloom with nights of vigil.
Such service now befits you.

Let Shonnin come
By moonset to the bar, and take the boat
As usual to her moorings. Why do you stare
All of you on me ? What's there strange in me ?
One would suppose you—well, 'tis no great matter
If you do hate. A nest of unfanged serpents !
[*Turns to go out. To MRS. GWYLLIM.*] Follow me, you.
Nelto. [*To OWAIN.*] I too have sealed the bond.

SCENE IV.

Night. A high wooden footbridge over the river. A long stretch of wet sand goes down to the sea. Beyond the distant fire of the lighthouse shows red. NELTO comes towards the bridge from Ty Mawr, carrying an unlighted lantern.

Nelto. Not to be thought of—think of anything else.
Think Adriano's waiting on the bridge.

[*Sings*] *Young hearts must follow
Where'er he may fly ;
Ladylove, light-o'-love,
Kiss me good-bye.*

What a smile he'll flash upon me ! Radiant. Bah !
I hate hot lips on my neck.

[Sings] *Love comes and goes,
 Hither and thither he flies
 Sleeps here in a rose,
 Wakes there in your eyes.*

Could I love no one ?

Somewhere to-night on this wide unknown earth,
That seems to heave with the innumerable breathing
Of her stilled inhabitant swarm, somewhere—No, never !
Farewell, lost love, for, oh, this night ends all,
Ere ever 'tis begun !

[Climbing the steps of the bridge.] Down slips the moon.
Broken and tarnished too ? Now she hangs motionless
As 'twere amazed, in a silver strait of sky
Between the long black cloud and the long black sea ;
The sea crawls like a snake.

[Sings]

*In the dead of the night the children were weeping,
The mother heard that—
[Catches sight of a seated figure on the top of the steps.]*

A woman on the bridge ?

My God ! Who ? Who ? What does she here at this hour ?
To turn were—No, by Heaven, I will not turn !

Mrs. Gwyllim. [On the top of the steps. Rising.]

Ellen ?

Nelto [coming to the top of the steps]. Mother ! What
are you doing here ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. What are you doing ?

Nelto.

Hurrying to meet the boat,

Pray let me pass.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Why does not Shonnin go ?
Is this girl's work ?

Nelto. You know I often do it.
I am full as strong as he is.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Yet I say
You shall not.

Nelto. Mother, you speak very strangely.
This trouble about Shonnin——

Mrs. Gwyllim. Where's your lantern ?
Perfectly dark ? Why, girl, you ought to know
This is a dangerous shore.

Nelto. There's light enough.
Mother, go home. You've nothing on your head,
The uncivil wind scatters your silver hair
Like a lone cloud fleecing above the moon.
You should return. Think, Shonnin goes to-night,
May even be gone. Bid him farewell.

Mrs. Gwyllim. No farewells.
I've had too many of them. He is not going.
[*Holding up a key.*] His bedroom door is fast.
Nelto. Ah ! That's well thought of,
Very well done. But, Mother, now you've told me,
Pray hasten home. The moon stoops to the sea,
I hear the mounting surge. Haste—let me go.
Why do you hold me ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. Is your lamp well trimmed ?
In the lantern ?

Nelto. Why delay me ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. I do not.
I stop you.

Nelto. For God's sake ! This is madness.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Give me that lantern. What ! am I
not your mother ?
Shall I not be obeyed ? Give me the lantern,
And go you home. I mean myself to meet
The boat to-night.

Yes, Nelto, I do know.
I am an eavesdropper—that's how I know it.

Nelto. You do ? You mean to thwart us ? Fatal, fond,
Unhappy woman ! Ay, you will do nothing
Yourself to save yourself, to save your children !
We must all die to please you, go to Bedlam,
Be trodden in the mire——

Mrs. Gwyllim. Child, you are wrong.

Nelto. Pardon me, Mother—Oh, forgive me, Mother !
But in this purposed business of mine,
Which is wise, equitable, the only Justice
We are like to obtain, why will you thwart me ? Go,
Go home, forget, be innocent——

Mrs. Gwyllim. To you
I say those words : my Ellen must be innocent.
The crime, if the imagination be a crime,
Is Owain's ; I cannot clear him. The execution
Shall be mine only.

Nelto. Yours, Mother ? You ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. Yes. I surprise you, like an unknown
creature
Splitting from out a dry familiar shape.
I do surprise myself, for I am free ;
The husk has split, out darts a winged life
And leaps on the wind. When I went forth to-night
I was yet undetermined. Girl, behold me !
Am I not changed ? All's fallen from me now
But naked motherhood. What ! Shall a hare
Turn on the red-jawed dogs, being a mother,
The unpitying lioness suckle her whelps
Smeared with her heart's blood, this one law be stamped
For ever on the imperishable stuff
Of our mortality, and I, I only
Forbidden to obey it ? A bitter curse
Light on me if I do not. Give me the lantern.
I must save my children.

Nelto [*embracing her*]. Well said, oh, most well,
Dear Mother ! I must not weep now. Pray forgive me.

Yet do not intervene ; make me your instrument.
 Consider, all hangs on his not observing
 The least unusual circumstance. Your presence
 Sobers him, even by the unnatural hate
 He bears towards you, and thrust thus strangely on him,
 Would prick his observation.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Alas ! that's true.

Nelto. O me, your small soft arms ! In mine the
 muscles

Leap like a man's. When have you handled boats ?
 Ours is a heavy one, and the gusty wind
 Drives dead on shore. It will be necessary
 To push out immediately, lest he discover
 The trap ere he's well in. You cannot do it.

Mrs. Gwyllim. What matter if I fail ? I shall but
 perish,
 'Tis simple.

Nelto. No, your failure means our failure.
 Never again could we attempt this business,
 Once having failed. And mother, my dear mother,
 Your children cannot lose you. Think of Owain,
 Your little ones left to the hawker's girl
 And her base kind.

Mrs. Gwyllim. You torture me——

Nelto. I speak truth.
 Mine is the undertaking, or 'twere best
 To abandon it. Resolve, ere the moon's rim
 Grazes the sea.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Ellen, you are too young ;
 You should be innocent——

Nelto. Never again
 After this night. Come, mother, I am yours ;
 Make me a wanton or an avenger.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Powers
 That set my spirit to swing on such a thread
 Over mere blackness, teach me now to guide it !

Nelto. Mother, the moon dips.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Go, my daughter, go !

And let these hands, these miserable hands,
Too weak to avenge my children, let them be
Yet strong enough to pull upon my head
God's everlasting judgement ! All that weight
Fall on me only !

Nelto. Amen, so let it be,

If so it may be.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Farewell.

Nelto. I'd forgotten

Something of urgency. Haste to extinguish
The lamp in the parlour window, lest it guide him
Too well in the dark.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Better, I think, rekindle it

In the granary dormer.

Nelto. Good. To shift the light

About that distance, should serve very well
Our purpose.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Hence, and may the black Heaven shield
you !

[Goes away in the direction of Ty Mawr, while NELTO
descends the steps on the further side.]

Nelto [sings].

*In the dead of the night, the moon shining brightly,
From her tomb by the church——*

What's all that red

Awash on the oozed sand ? Fool ! 'Tis reflection
From the lighthouse fire. What ! Is it different
To-night ?

[Sings]

*By the bridge o'er the stream, by the path up the meadow,
Like a bird, like a gleam, thro' the wind, thro' the shadow——*

If he should scream out horribly ?

I must hear and never help. O God ! I could not,

I must return. I must——

[Sings] *Boom, boom, boom !*
From the tower in the silence there sounds the great bell.

Plumb drops the moon !
 Drown not so fast ! Wait for me—wait awhile.
 [Runs down the sands towards the sea.]

SCENE V.

Night. The inner room. OWAIN in his chair at the window looking towards the sea. His mother beside him. The curtains are drawn back and there is no light in the room except a candle on the ground.

Mrs. Gwyllim. She will be drowned.

Owain. Not so. She cannot be.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Cannot ?

He does not come. She's waiting all this while,
 And the tide storming up. Oh, but this darkness !
 Is that foam at the river's mouth ? I'm sure by now
 Great rushing surges rise like sheeted phantoms
 Momently from the headland. But one sees nothing.

Owain. Enough ; the lighthouse——

Mrs. Gwyllim. Ay, that glares at us.

Owain. And yon small stationary light——

Mrs. Gwyllim. So small !

What if he overlooked it ? Landed there,
 At the usual place ? She's lost so.

Owain. No, no, mother !

Shall we not mark him ? Shonnin must run down
 And fetch her off with the boat.

Mrs. Gwyllim. But tell me, Owain,

What if he does not come ?

Owain. Impossible.

He never yet delayed the night there.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Never!
These will-o'-the wisps, "never," "impossible,"
Misguide men to their ruin. What if he did?
There's not another boat on the island.

Owain. None.
But mother, do not with distracted horrors
Flaw the firm texture of resolved minds.
Rather we should drug deep imagination,
Leaving a mere mechanic sense to observe
An unmeaning light, nor search the invisible
Behind it, even for facts; to see her yonder,
Alone on the bar, and—Vengeance on all sight
But eyesight! What do we see here that's fearful?
A night much less tempestuous than most
Of this mad season, darkness and two lights.
Ah, but another, as I live! Yes surely;
'Tis gone now, but I'd swear—quick, mother, quick!
Bring me the telescope.

Mrs. Gwyllim. His telescope?
It is forbidden, I dare not.

Owain. You forget
How much you dare to-night.

Mrs. Gwyllim [*laughing wildly*]. Oh, I'm a fool,
A very idiot! I will fetch it. [*Goes out.*]

Owain. Now,
Gwyllim, my devil has yours by the throat;
They tussle up and down. Shall's wager on them?
Hike a good devil! Yours is a tough grey fellow,
Yet will I back my pup—he bears a name,
A dreadful name, whose echoes roar of blood
Down the black galleries of bottomless Hell
To the unplumbed primal void.

[*To MRS. GWYLLIM, who re-enters with a telescope.*]
You have it? Good!
You have been speedy.

Mrs. Gwyllim. I have brought the night-glass.

[Placing the telescope on a table between OWAIN and the window, and fumbling with it.]

I cannot fix it.

Owain. Come, give it to me.

Your hand shakes like a leaf. Do you see the light ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. No, I—I cannot see anything.

Owain. There !

I have it. Look ! That's the boat right enough,
She ducks to the hurrying seas. Again 'tis lost,
Twinkles again.

[A sound of knocking.]

Mrs. Gwyllim. Hush ! Do you hear that noise ?

There—there—what can it be ?

Owain [listening]. 'Tis Shonnin.

He's hammering on his bedroom door, poor fool,
Discreetly, thinking you'll go free him.

Mrs. Gwyllim. [sinking on the floor, and hiding her face in the couch]. Shonnin !

Owain. You know his purpose. Well, if ours succeed——

Mrs. Gwyllim. Ah——

Owain. He is better where he is.

[Looking out of the window.] The wind

Sits on her quarter. She flies straight, too straight.

Can a drunkard hold her tiller ? Asleep or drunk,

If but his hand be there, some instinct in it

Answers to wind and tide. Hell take his instinct !

[A sound of knocking again.]

Mrs. Gwyllim. Hark ! again !

And louder—louder. Heavens ! He'll raise the house.

Owain. David's his only neighbour ; he's as fixed
As a rock when once abed.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Promise me, Owain,
Whatever happens, Shonnin shall know nothing
Of this—this——

Owain. Shonnin, I fear, has heard so much
He needs must guess the whole.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Not my part in it.
I'll hang for you, Owain, but not that——

Owain. Be sure
He shall know nothing of that. Look ! Look, Mother !
By Heaven, he's keeping off ! He'll hold right on
To the other side the river. Does he not mark
The light ? What does it mean ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. Nothing, I think.
He backs against the wind, lest it should push him
Too suddenly ashore.

Owain. Plague on this caution !

Mrs. Gwyllim. She swings her light aloft ; see, it burns
strongly,

He cannot overlook it. Hark ! What's that ?

Owain. The knocking's over. I hear nothing.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Hush !

Owain. Steps overhead ! Now may a thousand devils——

*[The steps come downstairs and about the house. Shonnin
is heard without, calling "Mother !"]*

Mrs. Gwyllim *[blowing out the light and crouching down
behind OWAIN's chair]*. Ah—I knew it.

Shonnin *[coming into the outer room]*. Mother !

[He pushes the door of the inner room and enters.]

Is anyone here ?

Why is it all so dark ? I'm sure there's some one,

Although I cannot see. Who's there ?

[Gropes round, and takes hold of OWAIN.]

You, Owain ?

Owain. Shonnin ? Is that you ? You startled me.
I was asleep.

Shonnin. But why the devil here ?

Owain. I was disinclined for bed. At times this chair
Appears the easier.

Shonnin. Where can Mother be ?
She's nowhere in the house. Yon lamp's extinguished,
Yet he is not returned. Owain, she's gone.

Owain. Well? May she not walk abroad?

Shonnin.

What, Mother?

Owain, my mind misgives me. That countenance
She wore this evening—strange to all discourse,
Fixed, desperately brooding. Oh, I should have guessed
The meaning!

Owain. Why, what meaning?

Shonnin.

Self-destruction.

Owain. Nonsense. You are a dreamer. Search again.
She's asleep somewhere.

Shonnin.

Yes, I have had dreams,
Horrible dreams. I almost could believe
Ill things afoot to-night.

Owain.

Go—you disturb me.

Shonnin. 'Tis superstition. Where are flint and steel?
Ay, here they are. That lamp must be re-kindled,
Else there'll be cruel doings on his return.

*[He goes into the outer room, and is heard walking about
and striking a light. Presently he re-enters, with a
lighted candle in his hand.]*

What does this mean? There is no lamp.

Owain.

Go, fool!

Shonnin. Why is the light on the shore so strangely
placed?

'Tis almost opposite. Speak, Owain, man!

A monstrous dream! Or else—you are a murderer.

Owain. I am, and I am justified. Content you;
You will be innocent.

Shonnin.

I intend to be.

Who else is here? Is it Nelto? O my God! [MRS.

GWYLLIM rises to her feet.]

What are you doing here, Mother? Why were you silent
When I came to seek you? Mother, answer me,
Don't look upon me thus; have pity on me—
Not pity, rather curse me, for on my soul
I do suspect you. Hate me for it, Mother,

Only answer my question. I am dull,
Dull, and a villain ! Despise me, only swear,
My perfect gentle mother, make me an oath
By things religious, by the Almighty God—
That you are innocent of the least knowledge
Of this unnatural crime.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Unnatural, Shonnin ?
I was unnatural when I let this monster
Destroy my children. Yes, I watched him tamely.
A beast defends her young. Now that themselves
Defend themselves, his blood be on his head,
And upon mine.

Shonnin. My mother ! Merciful Heaven !

Mrs. Gwyllim. Would 'twere my brain conceived this
retribution,
And Owain at his book ! Would 'twere my hand
Held yonder beckoning light, my little Nelto
Asleep with her sisters ! Would that I alone
Were guilty, and they innocent. That's my regret.

Shonnin. Mother ! My God, all's whirling in my head
And my heart too ! Oh, this is sleep-walking !
Either you sleep or I. Wake—understand.
'Tis murder that's about, and worse than murder,
Because, however we may reason, this man,
This miserable man, is yet our father,
Your husband.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Ay, these vacant syllables
Had once power over me. Their spell is broken.

Shonnin. I dreamed I saw you dead, dead and corrupting.
I wish it had been true.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Why would you leave me ?
It was not for myself—I have endured
An Indian's torture. Ropes of steel will break
At length with the ounce too much. Why would you
leave me ?
You should not have——

Shonnin. A truce to all reproaches.
I have no leisure for them ; I must be doing.
Had he not locked me in—had David heard me
Ten minutes earlier——

Owain. It was David, was it ?
Trust not in fools, not even in their folly.

Shonnin. Yet there is time to save him.

[*He reaches the door as MRS. GWYLLIM rushes to close it.*]

Owain. Stop, stop, Shonnin !
There is not time. There's surf in the river mouth.
You cannot cross it.

Shonnin. I will, if necessary.

Mrs. Gwyllim. A stronger swimmer could not. You are
cramped
If the water's cold.

Shonnin. A light's the thing most needed.

Owain. They have both the lanterns.

Shonnin [*opening the door*]. I'll go find a lamp
Instantly. [*To his mother, who clings to him.*] Let me go.

Mrs. Gwyllim. You shall not go.
Or I'll go with you.

Shonnin. Mother, I'll not have you.
I cannot. No.

[*After a minute MRS. GWYLLIM looses him. He goes out.*]

Owain. Go, then ! You are too late
To traverse our design so it do prosper ;
If not, why then his presence on the bar,
On the customary side were best for Nelto,
Safer for all of us.

Mrs. Gwyllim. I have lost my son.
His heart is changed to me. It was for his sake,
For all your sakes ; yet he'll not pardon me,
Not understand.

Owain. Shame ! Shame upon him, then.
You always loved him best. O Mother, Mother !
I had most need of love, a thing so maimed

And disinherited !

Mrs. Gwyllim. My unhappy Owain,
Have I not loved you ?

Owain. Yes, but not enough.
This night shuts up the passage of his heart
Against you ? Well, some slight indifferent girl
Had done it to-morrow. I am yours unchangeably,
Yours only. This so-scorned detested deed
Knits up us two in an eternal friendship
Death can alone disjoin. You'll love me best,
Mother, me best ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. My child, indeed I love you,
Always have loved and shall—but what I shall do
After to-night's unthinkable. Oh, this night
Opened like an abyss ! We toppled down it,
And still we fall, whirling upon ourselves,
Unguiding and unguided, spinning down
An infinite blackness to an uncharted bottom.
Talk not of what we shall be when we've touched it.

Owain. I am too much, it seems, my father's son,
To be well loved ; yet were I not—Ah ! See !
He's round—he's round ! There—there ! his light
Flying this way !

Mrs. Gwyllim. He's not yet in, not landed.
Look ! At the garden-gate——

Owain. Shonnin with a lamp.
What is it ? Where did he find it ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. A small lamp
In a wooden frame hangs on the cellar stairs.
He's thought of it.

Owain. A feeble flame enough,
Invisible at a distance, thank our fortune.
Stars of the starless night, in your blind courses
At length ye fight for us ! Running like a hare !
Run, lad ! We are before you.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Now Heaven grant

He may not attempt the river !

Owain.

Oh, he'll not !

Shonnin's no dare-devil ; don't consider it.

See, see, he's caught ! I know as though 'twere noonday,

His sail's down ; now he's pushing quietly in.

The light moves slow, damnation slow. Come, hurry !

Don't keep us all night on the gridiron. Look !

Mother—you are not looking.

Mrs. Gwyllim.

I cannot look.

O—O me !

Owain. He'll land in another moment.

Nelto has met him : which is her lantern now ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. Poor girl—poor wretch ! I know not
what to wish,

And pray we dare not.

Owain.

They oscillate together.

One's moving now. Right ! Coming across the bar.

Why does it stop ? Push off, Nelto, push off !

Ay, now he moves again. The telescope !

[*Looking through it.*] The light's in his hand doubtless, and
lurches with him.

I know his gait o' nights. Plague seize you, girl !

Why do you loiter ? Haste ! You should be away.

Mrs. Gwyllim. The tide sets up the bar, the wind's against
her,

And she—she's but a girl.

Owain.

Ay, but a brave one,

And pulls a good oar. What ! Do you suppose,

Were I other than I am, I'd leave her to it ?

Would we were face to face, my knife in his heart,

Come after it what might come !

Bravely, Nelto !

She's under way at last. Pull for your life !

[*Throws himself back in his chair.*]

Our part is now accomplished. What remains

Let the unconscious sea, the accustomed tide

Hold to its issue.

Mrs. Gwyllim [*hiding her face*]. Oh ! Oh ! horrible—
Merciful God !

Owain. What is it ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. Did you hear nothing ?

Owain. No, not a sound.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Then 'twas my haunted fancy.

Owain. The light on the sand—Mother, do you see it ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. No.

Owain. It has disappeared. That means—

Mrs. Gwyllim. He's sinking—

Down, down, down to the bottomless pit,

And our souls with him.

Owain. Do you understand

What the boat's doing ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. It returns.

Owain. Returns ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. Owain, that sound

I seemed to hear—what if it were a sound,

A hideous outcry, audible a moment

Even here ?

Owain. Well—if it were ? Infernal powers !

She is ashore. Yonder her light comes flitting

Over the bar. Oh, this is unbound madness !

It can't be Nelto ! 'Tis a will-'o-the-wisp,

Or God knows who !

Mrs. Gwyllim. 'Tis she. An hour or more

Have we not watched her ? She has a heart of flesh,

Ears has she not ? How if, with scream on scream,

His agony pursued her ? She's no monster.

She's gone to his assistance.

Owain. His assistance ?

Mrs. Gwyllim. See, the light stops.

Owain. Ay, where his disappeared.

She can't assist him, oh, that's manifest.

Nelto is reasonable. The thing's not possible

For her unaided—would she were at sea,
Miles out in a gale—'twere better——

Mrs. Gwyllim.

What can we do?

Owain. Nothing—we cannot reach her. Nay, she's safe.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Where's Shonnin?

Owain. [*looking through the telescope*]. His lamp must be
extinguished,

I cannot find—yes, on the opposite shore

I see it. It moves—and now is stationary.

The river mouth's impassable. He sees that.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Heaven send he may!

[*A silence.*] Her light—it reddens, fades, and now 'tis
gone.

[*OWAIN searches with the telescope.*]

You cannot find it?

Owain.

Shonnin still seems yonder.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Seems—Ay, but is he? And Ellen?

Where is she?

Owain. Wait, mother—stay. The merest accident
May quench a light—they'll soon be coming home.
However 'tis, we are helpless.

Mrs. Gwyllim.

O my God!

Why do I call on God! Let me call rather

On potencies of Hell, for they do owe us

Protection on their errands.

[*There is again a silence.*] Listen! The tide.
It has swirled about the bar; now half the quicksand
Is covered with long shallow crawling waves,
And swift as fire the thin pools run and deepen
On the other side, ankle-deep, knee-deep, waist-deep—
Do I need mine eyes? Have not my ears been filled
These twenty years with the sea's sound? I know
To a hair's-breadth where it is. Find me his light.

Owain. [*looking*]. I have found it. Ah! This moment
it is gone.

Mrs. Gwyllim. The tide o'er-runs it. Shonnin is not
there.

I'll to the cottages and rouse——

Owain. Rouse no one,
'Twould but endanger us. 'Tis very like
They are in the boat, both of them safe enough,
Waiting for the flood tide.

Mrs. Gwyllim. I have no time
For smooth conjecture or slow-footed reason.
I must away, discover, know, do something,
Do something instantly. [Going out.

Owain. Do something? What?
We can do nothing.

SCENE VI.

The same. The grey light of dawn coming in through the
windows.

Owain. The day. Wherefore the day?
Rather perpetual suspensive night
Cover Ty Mawr. But still the rolling earth
Pushes her giant shoulder towards the sun,
And myriad eyes of myriad living things
Begin to shine expecting it.

I'll not look.
The dark sea drinks the greyness of the sky,
Then all's one wan immensity. What else?
What shall day show or not show?

Had one told me
Yesterday: By to-morrow he'll be dead,
And you will wish it yesterday once more—
I had merely laughed. But now, but now, if prayer
Could anything, my soul how I would pray
To have him back again, that loathed tyrant,
Bolting out venomous insults! Have him back?

So he would heave this nightmare from my heart.
 Shonnin, Nelto, are dead? Impossible!
 Would I could waken! Oh, this hideous anguish
 Must somehow end! No, it must be endured.
 Come, be a man!
 For there's my mother's step on the garden-walk.
 It hastens, yet methinks 'tis deeply loaded
 With an assured calamity.

[Enter MRS. GWYLLIM, her skirts dragged with sand
 and water.]

Well Mother?

Mrs. Gwyllim. [Showing a small shawl, dripping wet.]
 Nothing but this.

Owain. Nelto's. Where did you find it?

Mrs. Gwyllim. Just opposite, on the shore. I called old
 Williams

To bring his lantern.

Owain. Ay, 'tis Nelto's shawl.

Mrs. Gwyllim. What does that prove? Why, one lets
 drop a shawl

Easily.

Not a word? You who've so many
 Smooth and ingenious words will spare not one
 To hold me from despair? You'd pity me
 Did you but guess what an eternity
 I have been searching for them.

Owain. I've been waiting
 The same eternity.

Mrs. Gwyllim. See, see! I've waded
 Waist-deep and shrieked, holloaing against the wind—
 Yet nothing answered.

What of that? The wind
 Blew back my voice. Shall one despair so soon?
 The comfortable light brings hope. Look yonder!
 There is the boat! It were an easy thing,
 Old Williams says, the boat being water-logged,

Just there, in such a tide to get aground.

They are waiting for the day.

Owain. Old Williams thinks so?

His eyesight fails. I would mine own confirmed him.

No, I'm not cruel. Mother, let's brace our hearts.

I think that boat is empty.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Look! Look!

To me it seems there's something lying there.

They sleep perhaps.

[OWAIN looks at the boat through the telescope.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Well? What do you see?

What? Who?

Owain. Why, no one.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Look in the boat.

Owain. I have.

Mrs. Gwyllim. What did you see?

Owain. I saw the sail.

Mrs. Gwyllim. Nothing besides?

Owain. No, nothing.

Mrs. Gwyllim. There's someone lying under it?

Owain. No, no one.

Mrs. Gwyllim [taking the telescope]. You are mistaken, you must be mistaken,

For if they are not in the boat, where can they be?

I have looked and looked, there's not a possible place

But I have searched.

[Looks through the telescope, then turns away.—

There's something in my eyes,

My hand trembles. Do look again.

Owain. O Mother!

Mrs. Gwyllim. Where are my children, if they are not there?

They cannot both be—Owain, where are they?

Owain. [Makes a gesture towards the sea.] Mother,

May God have mercy on us!

Mrs. Gwyllim. No, not both,

Not both ! She's somewhere in the house. Come, Ellen !
She is afraid to come. Come, Nelto, Nelto !
Shonnin, my heart's adored, Shonnin, my love,
Do not be angry with me, answer, Shonnin,
Shonnin ! Not dead—not dead !

Owain.

O hush—hush—hush !

THE PRINCESS OF HANOVER

Dedicated to Bella Napier

PERSONAGES

ERNEST AUGUSTUS, ELECTOR OF HANOVER.

SOPHIA, ELECTRESS OF HANOVER.

GEORGE, ELECTORAL PRINCE OF HANOVER, *afterwards*
George I. of England.

SOPHIA DOROTHEA, ELECTORAL PRINCESS OF HANOVER,
daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Zell. Called by Königs-
marck, Léonisse.

THE DUKE OF ZELL, *brother of the Elector of Hanover.*

THE DUCHESS OF ZELL, *formerly Eléonore d'Olbreuse, and*
morganatic wife of the Duke.

CLARA VON PLATEN, *commonly called Madame Platen, Mistress*
of the Elector.

ERMINGARDA VON SCHULENBURG, *Mistress of the Electoral*
Prince of Hanover.

PRINCE CHARLES }
PRINCE MAX } *younger sons of the Elector.*
PRINCE ERNEST }

The young PRINCE GEORGE and the little PRINCESS, children of
the Electoral Prince and Princess of Hanover.

PHILIP VON KÖNIGSMARCK, *a Swedish nobleman and officer in*
the Hanoverian Army.

AURORA VON KÖNIGSMARCK, *his sister.*

LEONORA VON KNESEBECK, *lady-in-waiting to the Electoral*
Princess of Hanover.

VON MESBACH, *a courtier and spy of Madame Platen's.*

HILDEBRAND, *secretary to Königsmarck.*

COUNT VON PLATEN, *husband to Madame Platen.*

BARONESS VON HEINEBURG, *lady-in-waiting to the Electress.*

BARON VON BLASEWITZ

COUNTESS VON DUDERSTADT } *Hanoverian courtiers.*
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN }

HALBERDIERS.

THE PRINCESS OF HANOVER

OVERTURE

The garden of Herrenhausen on a summer evening. A terrace is seen on the left, with steps descending to the garden and a marble bench below it. The terrace runs back from the eye, and parallel to it is a view of fountains, formal alleys, clipped trees and statues. HILDEBRAND is seated on the bench below the terrace playing upon the lute and singing.

THE BALLAD OF THE MAIDEN AND THE
ELFIN LOVER

*Hushed are the houses, the lamps are all sleeping,
But the moon, the white moon is awake.
At eve the spinners tell beside the doorway
Of evil spirits and their accursed love,
Fiercer than hate. Close well the curtains,
For the moon—and what beside?—is awake.*

Dark and warm the narrow room,
But the gold and silver broom
On the perfumed hills was blowing
When the maiden went there all alone.

Forth she went with swinging hair,
While the moon in heaven's bare
Rode, the vacant pathway showing.
By the shore the maiden walked alone.

Nothing moved but on the sand
Shadows like a dial hand,
Slender shade of feathered sedges,
Broad rock-shadows veering under the moon.

Ere the shadows had moved a span
Waking or sleeping she saw a man,
On the bare and bright sea-edges,
A man of Elfland under the moon.

Yet the maiden had no fear ;
Her seemed she had loved him a long year,
Oft had seen him pale for her kisses,
Often looked on him silent for love.

In an hour they knew must end,
All of their hearts they two did spend,
Spent their store of mortal blisses
Spent in an hour the long wonder of love.

When the primrose morning crept
Low along the sky, she slept ;
Still in the dark of heaven above her
Small as a jewel hung the glittering moon.

Hushed and wan the morning broke,
Wonderingly the girl awoke,
Saw no more the elfin lover
Nor gentle shadows following the white moon.

In the unsubstantial day
Far off the floating hills were gray,
She looked across the airy water
And idly through her fingers poured the sand.

Suddenly her heart began
To beat, for she saw the steps of a man.
Trembling from the ground she caught her
And followed them along the lonely sand.

They ended where a great stone
Like a ruined tower stood alone.
At the blind gate she marked more clearly
The track, for in every step was blood.

She beat at the stone on every side,
 "Let me come to my love!" she cried,
 "Let me in, for I love him dearly!"
 And, "Who is this that hath shed his heart's blood?"

At length deep in the rock, one said,
 Fiercely shrieking, "My love is dead.
 I have killed him, accursed mortal."
 Laughing, "And I have avenged him. Go thy way."

Fishermen with chants begun
 To haul their net in the sparkling sun;
 Turning from the closed portal
 Silent she stared on them and went her way.

At every step she seemed to feel
 Cutting her heart a knife of steel.
 Treading slow, as heavy-laden,
 Home she came and beat at her father's door.

She turned and saw down the dusty street
 Blood in the tracks of her own feet.
 Never knew the dead maiden
 Whether any opened her father's door.

*At eve the spinners tell beside the doorway
 Of evil spirits and their accursed love.*

[HILDEBRAND goes out, up the garden as he sings.]

ACT I.

SCENE I.

*The garden at Herrenhausen, with the terrace, as before. The
 ELECTORAL PRINCE OF HANOVER, PRINCE CHARLES, and
 PRINCE MAX come along the terrace.*

Electoral Prince. God be thanked that is over!

Prince Max. I should give greater thanks if it had never

been. Pork stew, beef stew, mutton stew, onion pudding, and all served with grease! Bah!

Electoral Prince. I like grease; it is wholesome. It was a good German dinner and so will I always eat. I hate your French kickshaws. No, I did not thank God I had got away from dinner, I thanked God I had got away from my mother. England, always England! But her Highness has never been to England and I have. They are mad, the English, they have no respect, no etiquette. They would take off my head with no more ado than if I were a pullet.

Prince Charles. You can give the place to Max if you don't want it.

Prince Max. I would rather have the money.

Electoral Prince. No, no, the money is just what I want. It's the same cursed business as my marriage. I had to take my wife to get the money, and now in the end I shall have to take England to get the money.

Prince Charles. Treat England the same way as you have treated your wife. Take her—and neglect her.

Prince Max. Give me half the money and I'll take both—England and your wife.

Electoral Prince. I wish I had thought of that before I married. I believe you would have taken the French Madame's jade of a daughter for less than half her dowry.

Prince Max. *Parbleu!* Prince, I would.

Electoral Prince. You're in love with my wife.

Prince Charles. And so am I.

Electoral Prince. But that's nothing.

Prince Max. No, for as every one knows, she is damnably, utterly heartless, a complete coquette.

Electoral Prince. I don't approve of your flirting with my wife. But if some one else ran away with her I should be glad, for then I could kill him and she also would trouble me no more.

Prince Charles. Beware, Electoral Highness! Remember

your own precious existence hangs upon the Princess of Hanover's. Is it not written in the stars that you yourself must die within a year of your wife? No, no! Whatever happens you cannot kill Sophie.

Electoral Prince. I cannot even wish her to die. It is a cursed prophecy, and I would to Heaven I could forget it. I hate my wife, I hate the Princess of Hanover.

Prince Charles. You are drunk, George.

Electoral Prince. Not very drunk. How can I be? Did you ever taste such liquor as the Elector gives us? I have ordered some good French wine to the pavilion yonder and some friends to help drink it. [Goes out.]

Prince Charles. Our precious brother!

Prince Max. Our precious elder brother! 'Tis for him we younger sons are stripped of our rights and dignities, 'tis for his sake that we are beggared.

[*The ELECTOR and ELECTRESS come along the terrace accompanied by the PRINCESS OF HANOVER and her children, the young PRINCE GEORGE and the little Princess, ELEONORE, DUCHESS OF ZELL, and ladies and gentlemen.*]

Electress. England! I boast my England? I do boast her:

Say to be monarch there's a sovereignty
Sole in a world of thrones. Who governs England
Rules over men.

Elector. Here then what do we, Madam?

Electress. Herd sheep.

Elector. [*Sings.*]

*A doublet green and silken hose,
Rose, rose,
A golden crook as shepherds use
For thee I'll choose—*

[*Bowing.*] Madam, my shepherdess, at your good service—
Your dainty shepherd!

Duchess. [To the ELECTOR.] Highness, your sheep at any rate

Are quiet souls ; they'll not cut off your head.

Electress. [Grumbling to herself.]

"Cut off your head !" That's all they know of England.

Elector. Madam Sister, you are right. These Englishmen

Are treacherous, fierce, like the unstable sea

Caught in perpetual swing of ebb and flow.

"I'll not be Queen of England," quoth the lady,

"Till I've two heads." Sophie, sweet daughterling,

Wilt thou be Queen of England ?

Princess.

Highness, no,

Not were I hydra-headed. These animals

Would chop me off twenty, spit into their hands

And fall to work on the others.

Electress.

Ignorant girl,

Peace ! What knowest thou of England ?

This my England,

Not fickle, no, nor of a changeable heart,

Nor swift to smite nor timorous in smiting.

She slew her king, majestically slew him.

Less loyal had been less guilty.

Elector. Diantre, your highness !

[Takes snuff.]

Wonderful woman ! This way lies a crown.

Max. In a nettle-bed.

Charles. In a gutter.

Princess.

Foul the hands

That are fain of it !

Electress. [To the Princess.] Thou'lt not be Queen of England ?

No, for by Heaven that needs a royal heart !

What were it to be Queen of England ? Answer,

Shade of the illustrious dead, answer, Elizabeth !

Were it to pack, distil into one brain

The master-thought of millions, in one bosom

To house a love great as a million loves
And manifold as they ; one word, "My people,"
Being in your mouth, what mother, spouse, child, lover
Mean upon other lips—your soul's main utterance
And key to your entire life ?

Then comes the reward.

Consider it, women, you whose happiness
Is lightly blown from ephemeral joy to joy,
Maidenhood, beauty, motherhood, ere it fall
Unwinged and spent with half your years. Consider
What 'twere to be a Queen,
A Queen of men, not marketable serfs.
Perchance you lean out from your balcony
One spring day, in the prime and rapture of youth,
And mark the immense crowd billowing beneath,
A sea of worshipping eyes, a ripple of hands
Claiming you theirs, lifting you to the height
Of their hearts' throne—all fathers, lovers, friends,

All yours and yours for ever.

These are the Immortals,

Not to be changed by mutability
Of the inconstant blood, or alienated
By circumstance, or in the unfeeling grave

To slumber careless.

You the years will change,

The small mechanic hours, you will grow old,
Dim-hearted, cinder-grey, will drop your playthings
One after one—Ay, but on any day
Choose you come forth, outstretching crooked hands,
Like those youth mocks, whispering with faded mouth
Such as men scorn, "My people"—and lo, the Im-
mortals !

A sea of worshipping eyes, a ripple of hands
Claiming you with the old rapture, lifting you
To the height of their hearts' throne, yours as in youth,
Yours on through age to death, sons, lovers, friends.

—This were for her that had a queen's heart.

Princess.

I

Have a woman's, madam. Truly one man's love,
One honourable love, would more content me
Than all your multitude's.

Max. [*Aside to the PRINCESS.*] Adorable Sophie!

[*To the ELECTRESS.*] Your Queen Elizabeth was a dry
old maid,

Was she not?

Electress. Boy, you talk like a girl.

Charles. You, mother,

Not like a Stuart. Whose heads have they cut off,
This people?—Stuart heads.

The crown's a Stuart's—I'd rather die defending it
Than live to wear't a usurper.

Elector.

Ay, ay, Charles,

Thou speakest well. I also love them not,
These English. Still, money must be considered.

Thou hast an excellent, shrewd, well-judging mother:

Respect her, Charles.

[*To the young PRINCE GEORGE.*]

Come hither, George, now come to Grandpapa.

Wilt thou be King of England, a rich King

With barrels of gold?

Young Prince.

That I will, Grandpapa!

Elector. What would'st thou do with it?

Young Prince.

Buy beer and wood.

Elector. Wood? *Donnerwetter!* Why would'st thou
buy wood?

Young Prince. To burn my books with. Hey, what a
fine bonfire!

We'd all eat pepper-cakes, and drink and drink

Till we were like the Prince, my father.

[*The ELECTOR laughs uproariously.*

Princess.

Chut!

Duchess. *Fi donc!*

In all your waxen body ; you cannot hate,
No, nor love either ! But between us two,
Me and my foe, Princess of Hanover,
There is a mortal hate ; it burns, it grows,
It cannot be assuaged unless by ruin,
By death, by triumph, it cannot have an end

Except——

[KÖNIGSMARCK and HILDEBRAND are heard singing
in the garden——

*They ended where a great stone
Like a ruined tower stood alone.
At the blind gate she marked more clearly
The track, for in every step was blood.*

Madame Platen. Hark ! Who is that ?

E. v. Schulenburg.

"The same young gentlemen

Studying their music.

Madame Platen.

O be silent ! Listen !

KÖNIGSMARCK sings——

*She beat at the stone on every side.
"Let me come in my love," she cried ;
"Let me in, for I love him dearly."
And "What is this that hath shut his heart's door ?"*

Madame Platen. That voice ! Ah, surely !

My Hermann, I implore of thee go,

Look, tell me who they are singing in the garden.

[SCHULENBURG leans near the balustrade of the terrace,
looking ; KÖNIGSMARCK, singing, more in the dis-
tance.

*No longer seen in the rock one still,
Fervently shrieking, "My love is dead,
I have killed him, unwound mortal."
Laughing, "And I have changed him. Go thy way."*

E. v. Schulenburg. 'Tis the handsome Count, Madam ; it is Königsmarck.

Madame Platen. [*Throwing her arms round SCHULENBURG.*] Ermingarda !

E. v. Schulenburg. Heavens ! What is the matter with you ?

Madame Platen. I love him.

E. v. Schulenburg. You mean Königsmarck ?

Madame Platen. Ermingarda, Listen, I entreat. You surely are my friend, Not thankless, nor a compelled sycophant—

No, but my friend.

Hold me, embrace me closer !

Yes, I do love him—Philip !—Königsmarck !

O brave lips blessed in the utterance !

Philip ! They kiss themselves upon the name.

E. v. Schulenburg. But you have the Elector——

Madame Platen. Yes, I have the Elector !

Old, negligent ; but let her not count upon him,

My triumphing enemy !

E. v. Schulenburg. What if he discovered—— ?

Madame Platen. He'll not discover. Well, and if he did ?

You think I dare not win my love, I dare not

Wear Philip on my heart, superbly wear him

For the world to see ?

Dare I not ? Ah, dear God !

E. v. Schulenburg. Madam, let me advise you.

Madame Platen. What do you advise,

Girl ? The continuance of the old routine ?

Power ! Money !

You suppose that having won them,

Having assured them, we are satisfied ?

I thought so, too, at your age. Then I wondered

What 'twas I lacked—and then came Königsmarck.

E. v. Schulenburg. What made you love him ?

In all your waxen body ; you cannot hate,
 No, nor love either ! But between us two,
 Me and my foe, Princess of Hanover,
 There is a mortal hate ; it burns, it grows,
 It cannot be assuaged unless by ruin,
 By death, by triumph, it cannot have an end

Except——

[KÖNIGSMARCK and HILDEBRAND are heard singing
 in the garden——

*They ended where a great stone
 Like a ruined tower stood alone.
 At the blind gate she marked more clearly
 The track, for in every step was blood.*

Madame Platen. Hark ! Who is that ?

E. v. Schulenburg.

'Tis some young gentlemen

Studying their music.

Madame Platen.

O be silent ! Listen !

KÖNIGSMARCK sings——

*She beat at the stone on every side.
 “ Let me come to my love,” she cried ;
 “ Let me in, for I love him dearly,”
 And “ Who is this that hath shed his heart’s blood ? ”*

Madame Platen. That voice ! Ay, surely !

My Ermingarda, I implore of thee go,

Look, tell me who they are singing in the garden.

[SCHULENBURG leans over the balustrade of the terrace,
 looking ; KÖNIGSMARCK, singing, more in the dis-
 tance.

*At length deep in the rock one said,
 Fiercely shrieking, “ My love is dead.
 I have killed him, accursed mortal.”
 Laughing, “ And I have avenged him. Go thy way.”*

E. v. Schulenburg. 'Tis the handsome Count, Madam ; it is Königsmarck.

Madame Platen. [Throwing her arms round SCHULENBURG.] Ermingarda !

E. v. Schulenburg. Heavens ! What is the matter with you ?

Madame Platen. I love him.

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Listen, I entreat. You surely are my friend,
Not thankless, nor a compelled sycophant—
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For the world to see ?

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Girl ? The continuance of the old routine ?
Power ! Money !

You suppose that having won them,
Having assured them, we are satisfied ?
I thought so, too, at your age. Then I wondered
What 'twas I lacked—and then came Königsmarck.

E. v. Schulenburg. What made you love him ?

Madame Platen. Why do you ask ? Your eyes alone can answer

What is beyond dispute.

E. v. Schulenburg. His sister Aurora
Is also beautiful. Why does she come here ?

Madame Platen. Why does he come here ?
Answer me that, Ermingarda.

E. v. Schulenburg. Surely, madam,
You are sufficient cause.

Madame Platen. Dear flattery !
I did imagine it once—— Without a word,
Suddenly he departed ; unannounced
He has returned, but cold, preoccupied
Like a philosopher. Who has transformed him ?
What magic altered ? Who unqualified
The amorous Königsmarck ?

E. v. Schulenburg. Some black Venetian
Met in a mask, her hair dyed red.

Madame Platen. The Princess.

E. v. Schulenburg. The Princess of Prussia ? What !
Consoled already

With a new amour ?

Madame Platen. Prussia ! Who talked of her ?
There's but one princess, one in all the world
For me, my enemy—the Princess of Hanover.

[KÖNIGSMARCK is in the garden with his back to the
terrace, playing on a lute. MADAME PLATEN advances
to the balustrade, and leans over it.

There's but one man that ever I did weigh
Against a ducat ! Put him now in the balance
Against the pearls of the East, an argosy,
Throw monarchs in, even magnificent France
Himself—my Philip, yet thou shouldst outweigh them !
I love thee ; and thou dare'st, thou dare'st love her !

E. v. Schulenburg. Madam, the whole of this is midsummer
madness.

I speak as a friend. If you will accuse the Princess
Of a lover, find a likelier—one of the Princes,
Not Königsmarck. Madam, your passion for him
Is a ruinous folly, natural in a girl,
But in a woman of your age, experience——

Madame Platen. My age! So thou must taunt me with
my years,

Thou baby-face!

Most true, my Königsmarck,

I bring thee not that bubble filled with fancy,
The heart of a girl, that cold and flimsy bubble.
A wine-red ruby, an orbéd jewel of flame
I bring thee, a woman's heart, Clara von Platen's.

I come to thee

Clothed in the purple of my regnant years,
Crowned with the diadem of men's vain desires,

I bring thee all I am,

Princes my vassals, kings my flatterers——

Would thou hadst known me

In the old days!

Would that thy heart had been

One of the million then I stole!

Cursed fortune

To have been so wealthy once to buy things worthless,

Now to stand thus, pitiful, counting my store.

Well, then, I count it! I say it is enough.

Time has not conquered me, but I come conquering,

Laden with the spoil of years.

I love thee, Königsmarck. Mine shalt thou be.

Look not again on her.

Never again look thou upon the Princess.

Think'st thou none can observe, none understand?

I know thou lovest her.

Forget her—or remember her at thy peril,

Thy deadly peril, for by omnipotent God,

Never will I abandon thee

—Königsmarck, the power is mine—
To the arms of her my abhorred enemy.

Darest thou yet love her ?

She shall die and thou

Even thou, the young, beloved, adored, thou also
Shalt die—for I will kill thee, Königsmarck.

[KÖNIGSMARCK and HILDEBRAND sing in the garden
below.

*Forth she came with swinging hair,
While the moon in heaven's bare
Rode, the vacant pathway showing—*

[PRINCESS OF HANOVER and the DUCHESS OF ZELL
appear at the further end of the terrace from PLATEN
and SCHULENBURG, followed at a distance by
LEONORA v. KNESEBECK, then PRINCE CHARLES
and AURORA approach KÖNIGSMARCK in the garden
below and speak with him. HILDEBRAND goes
away.

E. v. Schulenburg. Yonder's the Princess ; the Prince then
will not come here.

I am going, madam, will you not go with me ?

Madame Platen. If I can find some insult that pricks
deep

I'll stay and meet them.

—Nay, I am weary,

My head is heavy. I'll not meet them now.

[E. v. SCHULENBURG and MADAME PLATEN go out.
The DUCHESS and the PRINCESS advance along the
terrace.

Princess. I will not weep. How vain and vain are
tears !

I would un pitying Death were won with tears,

Even as compassionate Sleep.

She is worn Sorrow's nurse, whose breathing bosom

And quiet arms upgather in the night
What unassuaged griefs, what hoarse despairs !

Duchess. My little Sophie ! Always so impetuous !
You exaggerate, my dear, for what in sum
Makes your despair ? Your husband is unfaithful.
Why, so are thousands, millions of common men,
Princes invariably.

Princess. Was my father unfaithful ?

Duchess. Your father married me for love——

Princess. Not money ?

Dear heaven, had you been ignorant of love !
But no, you two had loved, you had been happy,
'Tis I must pay the price of your ambition.

Duchess. Forgive——

Princess. Thou, mother, needest no forgiveness.
Who never sinned but of necessity.

Duchess. Compelled, I brought thee to an abhorred
bridal,
Yielding thy cherished youth to a house of hate.

Princess. Accursed day !

Duchess. Enough of wasteful grief ! Rejoice, my daughter,
Because thou hast conquered ancient enmity.
The Electress holds thee dear——

Princess. Or pities me.

Duchess. The Elector prizes thee beyond his mistress,
Who chokes with her own venom.

Princess. [Laughing.] Fattens on it,
Visibly, madam.

Duchess. There's my own dear daughter !
Say, my sweet love, is there no pleasure in life ?
Gaiety and laughter,
Jewels, the dance, hast thou forgot to love them ?

Princess. I am often merry,
I can drink deep of joy, but Happiness——
Hush ! What a sinister word ! If any utter it
At festivals it falls as hollowly

As when a stone drops echoing down a well,
Hinting of deep, deep darkness and drowned things
Far underneath——

Duchess. My child, you are not yourself.

Princess. When Pierrot wore his face at carnival time
They cried, "What a bad mask!"

LEONORA V. KNESEBECK. [*Approaching.*] Pardon me,
madam,

Yonder Prince Charles comes with Count Königsmarck
And his late arrived sister.

[KÖNIGSMARCK and PRINCE CHARLES, preceded at a
little distance by AURORA, come up the garden below
to the terrace.

Königsmarck. Charles, she was weeping!

Charles. Only the usual tale; the unmannered beast,
Her husband, flouts her with his Schulenburg.

Königsmarck. Were he not your brother——

Charles. Pray, no delicacy

On that account——

Königsmarck. I'd cut his heart out.

Charles. Na!

This is fool's talk, Philip.

Königsmarck. Had you but known her,
The darling child that I, that every one
Protected! God! This mouth has kissed the blood
From her scratched finger——

Aurora. [*From the terrace steps.*] I am waiting for you,
Highness and brother.

Charles. Pardon, most fair lady!

[*They go on to the terrace where the PRINCESS OF HANOVER
and the DUCHESS OF ZELL are standing. PRINCE
CHARLES presents AURORA to them. They all talk
together, walking on the terrace, but presently the
PRINCESS and KÖNIGSMARCK stand apart from the
others. HILDEBRAND is singing out of sight.*

HILDEBRAND sings :

*Nothing moved but on the sand
Shadows like a dial hand,
Slender shade of feathered sedges,
Broad rock shadows veering under the moon*

*Ere the shadows had moved a span
Waking or sleeping she saw a man,
On the bare and bright sea-edges
A man of Elfland under the moon.*

*Yet the maiden had no fear,
Her seemed she had loved him a long year,
Oft had seen him pale for her kisses,
Often looked on him silent for love.*

Königsmarck. The sunshine on the old grey castle wall,
The autumnal ochre reeds in the blue moat——

Princess. Where in a row ridiculous white ducks
Would stand on their heads——until a pebble hit them——

Königsmarck. Flung by a certain little hand——

Princess.

No, no !

That I deny. I might throw, I hit nothing.

Yours was the stone and yours the ducks and drakes ;

Ten or a dozen, all along the moat,

You used to make. How I did envy them !

Königsmarck. Let me be hasty

To seize the opportune moment, since your Highness

Deigns to review those dim and minor passages

In her rich memory. Humbly I beseech her——

What is the offence

That has estranged now, since I came to Hanover,

One who were else unaltered ?

Princess.

Noble Count,

If I have failed in courtesy, seemed ungracious,

Impute it to a mind distract——

Königsmarck. Your Highness
Has never failed. Again I ask my offence
—Thus, on my knee.

Princess. My lord, the place is public.
You ask ? A bitter and declared enemy
Fronted me the first hour I came to Hanover,
Into a house of enemies. Well, this woman
Stands yet encamped against me. She is powerful,
Wealthy, while I—I can forgive the herd
Fawning upon her, but when my playfellow,
Friend of my too short years of happiness——
I mean when you, Count Königsmarck, appear
As the satellite of that unshamed harlot
Whom I justly abhor, that infamous harpy
Who shares my spoils to pay her——

Königsmarck. Madam, hear me——

Princess. Philip of Königsmarck, is it possible
I can believe that once sincere affection
Stands in the record of your memory ?

Königsmarck. Madam,
You must believe it.

How should I be cognisant
Of your court politics ? When I met this lady
By accident, ignorant of her name and country,
I found her fair enough, witty enough
To wile the casual hour. When she invited me
To Hanover, where I had other business,
Perchance I deemed, learning her paramount,
Her friendship serviceable. Yet from the day
I knew her what she was, arch enemy
Where I owed worship, Madam, I have shown the Countess
Bare courtesy.

Now, body of Bacchus !
I'll talk no more with her. No, may I perish
If I exchange a word—— !

Princess. [*Laughing.*] Still so impetuous !

Königsmarck, are you yet a boy ?

Who'd suffer

Should you offend grossly this paramount.

Lady of Hanover ? Not you, Sir Wanderer,

Who pitch your gay pavilion here or there ;

No, but myself.

She would divine, and if she did divine—

Why, I must lose a friend—

For we are friends again, are we not ?

Königsmarck.

Madam !

Princess. Propitiate her then.

Königsmarck.

And serve my Sovereign.

Thus let me seal our pact and my own pardon

On the same little hand——

Princess. [To the DUCHESS, who approaches, followed by the rest of the party.] Madam, we have quarrelled

In the old way and have been reconciled.

SCENE II.

A ball-room at the Palace. The ELECTOR and ELECTRESS, the three younger PRINCES, the PRINCESS dressed as Flora in a simple white dress, with carnations : the DUCHESS OF ZELL ; the DUKE OF ZELL dancing with MADAME PLATEN, who is magnificently attired and covered with jewels. KÖNIGSMARCK, AURORA, ERMINGARDA v. SCHULENBURG, COUNTESS v. DUDERSTADT, BARON v. BLASEWITZ, and other courtiers.

First Lady. What is it, gracious Countess ?

First Gentleman. Who is it, honoured madam ?

Second Lady. A scandal, a scandal ! Tell us instantly, dear Countess.

Second Gentleman. We have not tasted scandal for forty-eight hours. We are dying.

Countess v. Duderstadt. My lips are sealed.

First Lady. Is it about the Princess of Prussia and the little dancing-master?

Second Gentleman. You are mightily behind the times, Madam. That was over six weeks ago.

Second Lady. Or about a certain very great person and the Platen's waiting-maid? There was the devil to pay!

Second Gentleman. Ay, but it was the waiting-maid paid him. The Elector——

Countess. No, I thank God I listen to no scandal that concerns any true member of our gracious princely family, any true princess.

First Lady. Then it's the Princess of Hanover!

All. Ah!

First Gentleman. Has she at length rewarded the passion of Prince Max?

Second Lady. Or boxed his ears?

Second Gentleman. Or conspired with him?

Countess. I don't wonder none of you can guess.

All. Gracious Countess! Dear lady! Tell us—you must indeed.

Countess. *Ma foi!* ladies and gentlemen, I see I must oblige you, since the Baron will not. Yesterday the Electoral Princess, being as so commonly happens——

Baron v. Blasewitz. Indisposed and unable to dine at the princely table——

Countess. A strange sort of indisposition truly, for when our gracious Electress——

Blasewitz. Who is always so amiable, so mild, repairs to the Princess's apartments——

Countess. Where do you think she finds her? In bed?

Blasewitz. No, her Highness was not in bed. I deeply grieve to say that her Highness was——

Ladies and Gentlemen. Where? Where?

Blasewitz. Unheard of! Disgraceful!

First Lady. Where was she?

Countess. On the floor.

Blasewitz. Yes, on her hands and knees.

Countess. Playing with the Electoral children.

First Lady. *Quelle horreur !*

Second Lady. *Est il possible !*

First Gentleman. Monstrous !

Second Gentleman. The floor ! It was low, undeniably.

Baron v. Blasewitz. And it is in such manners that the heir of Hanover will be brought up !

First Lady. What was to be expected from such a marriage ?

Countess. Yes, indeed ! The daughter of the French Madame !

Princess of Hanover. [*To the ELECTOR.*]

Your Highness will not dance with me ? You must, Grandpapa !

Elector. Sophie, you are laughing at me.

Princess. Laugh at the Elector ! See, my father's dancing

With the Countess Platen. That's to please you, Highness, Dance with his daughter to please him.

Elector. Sophiechen,

I'll put thee off with a proxy.

Count of Königsmarck,

Approach !

Königsmarck. At your Highness' service.

Elector. We command you

To become our deputy, and personating
Most personably ourselves, to lead the Princess
Forth to the dance.

Königsmarck. Highness, I am all obedience
And gratitude for undeserved honour.

[*To the PRINCESS.*] Madam, I await the moment——

[*He bows and withdraws.*]

Max. Honoured Father,

Are there not princes here, young, personable——

Elector. And damnable bad dancers. Keep your breath

To cool your porridge, when you get it, Max.

Electress. You amaze me, gracious Prince ! Truly, odd couples

You have contrived ! To choose your princely son
Were more conformable——

Elector.

To etiquette.

Potztausend, Madam ! Are you such a Christian

You'll not allow me vex my Platen, eh ?

[He goes to speak to MADAME PLATEN, who has finished dancing.]

Duchess. *[To the PRINCESS.]* Is Flora so enamoured
Of her own beauty ? Or when she laughs in a mirror
Is it for other eyes, more circumspect,
Or, as is very probable, unallured ?

Princess. Madam ?

Duchess. The Elector chooses Platen's lover——

Princess. No !

Duchess. But I say she owns it——out of malice
To be your cavalier. 'Twill much amaze him,
Ay, and chagrin, to see his darling daughter
Ogling the fortunate swain——Platen and she
Pulling caps before the court for the same gallant.
How all the world will smile !

Königsmarck. *[Approaching.]* Highness, permit me.
I hear the summoning music.

[The PRINCESS, haughtily and in silence, accepts his hand, and they dance.]

A Gentleman. The Princess looks her loveliest.

Another Gentleman. Beautiful

In pure simplicity !

Mesbach. Bah ! Affectation !

Second Lady. She would be still pretty were she not a Princess.

Her Daughter. Mother, our jewels are nought. I'll wear carnations

And a white dress another day : they're perfect.

What a splendid cavalier ! Is he a prince,
Madam ?

Second Lady. No, but a Swede, wealthy and noble.
Handsome enough. Look not so long upon him,
He is a snare for eyes—the Countess Platen
Cannot remove hers from him.

Daughter. Out upon her !
She is as old as you.

Princess. [To KÖNIGSMARCK, with whom she is dancing.]

Count Königsmarck,
You held my hand too long ; observe the music.

Platen. [To SCHULENBURG.]
O, but my heart will burst !
I am enraged beyond measure with the Elector.
Is he mad to give Königsmarck to the Princess ?

Schulenburg. No, but he is jealous.

Platen. That for his jealousy !
She shall not have him, not though the fool Elector
Thrust him into her arms. I'll choose damnation
Rather than yield him. Child, what will you wager ?
My diamonds, girl—I am primed to dare the devil—
Against your necklet, Königsmarck is mine,
Mine before morning.

Schulenburg. But I love not wagers,
Because they are never certain.

Platen. This one shall be.

The Electress. [To PRINCE CHARLES.]

I want no coward son, yet be persuaded,
Charles, here's no place for honourable swords.
Enough the Emperor has his Hanoverians,
Bought by the hundred ; shall a prince, a brave one,
Ay, and a dear, be thrown him at a bargain,
To complete the tale ?

Charles. Mother, I would be gone.
The Elector is unjust—not even contented
With having robbed us of the inheritance,

He grudges at us. I'll build myself a throne
Of savage scimitars, or else I'll take them
In my appeased heart.

In truth I am sorry
Königsmarck will not join.
Persuade him, Madam.

[While he is speaking KÖNIGSMARCK approaches, conducting the PRINCESS to her seat. The ELECTRESS beckons them to her.]

Electress. *[Indicating CHARLES.]* My daughter, all our prayers,
Our prodigal persuasions, here fall barren.
Charles will go fight the Turks. God knows why fight 'em,

For none of us do. I am but his mother—
Have you no eloquence to turn his purpose?

Princess. All is exhausted, Madam, the Prince is adamant.

Electress. Then turn it elsewhere.

Count of Königsmarck,
Since our dear son, the well-beloved brother
Of a Princess to whom former benefits
And honourable friendship make you bounden,
Since he will go upon this dangerous business,
We pray you, a man older, more war-experienced,
Hardier than he, to accompany our prince.
Reap laurels for yourself, assist his youth
To reap them too, and above all, Königsmarck,
Bring him safe home again.

Königsmarck. *[To the PRINCESS.]* Do I understand, Highness, you join yourself to this requirement?

Princess. I do, my lord.

Königsmarck. The more must be my sorrow,
Electoral Highnesses, that my private business
Renders it difficult, I may say impossible,
To obey commands which should command obedience.

Electress. At least consideration.

Königsmarck. Pardon me, Highness.
 I cannot go.
Electress. You have permission, sir,
 To retire.
 [To CHARLES.] Your friend smacks of the savage North—
 Esau, in a smooth Italian Jacob-skin.
Charles. 'Tis a mettled courser. He who'd manage
 Königsmarck
 Must bear light on the rein.
Aurora. Nothing so becomes
 A Königsmarck as anger. Philip, my compliments!
 You are exceeding handsome.
Königsmarck. What? Damnation!
 Your pardon, sister, I am a mere Northman,
 One that was never apt to fawn and smile
 Where he has had offence.
Aurora. Who has offended you?
Königsmarck. The Electress.
Aurora. How, dear brother?
Königsmarck. She commands
 As easily as 'twere a ball-room compliment—
 "Pick up my fan," or "Hand my scent-bottle——"
 "Go to the Morea." I am not her subject,
 No, nor the Elector's hired mercenary,
 Following the honourable art of war
 As 'twere a trade. I am a gentleman,
 And one that very hardly owns allegiance
 To any King who crosses him——
Aurora. Yet, brother,
 Our shrewd Electress may have excellent reasons
 For wishing you in the Morea, at Kamschatka,
 Anywhere, in short. Your visits to the Princess
 Pass unobserved of the world, you being accompanied
 Always by a young Prince of known devotion
 To her. Yet something may be perceptible
 To this old, hard, well-judging woman.

Königsmarck.

What?

Aurora. You adore the Princess, she——

Königsmarck. [*Laughing bitterly.*] Say that she loves me!

Aurora. I wonder that she should. What women see——!

Königsmarck. Love? That capricious, haughty, cold coquette!

True she has called me "friend," has let her gaze
Melt in my own an instant: that was Wednesday.
To-night she treats me like a dog. By Heaven,
I'll make no woman's pastime, were she Empress
Of the Indies!

Madame Platen. [*Approaching.*] Count, you have outshone yourself!

Not Flora, no, nor Venus' self were worthy
To tread the dance with Königsmarck.

Königsmarck. [*Bowing.*] Fair Countess—
Yet Venus did abandon Königsmarck
To-night for a weightier cavalier. By Venus,
It was unkindly done!

Platen. Flatterer!
Yet not Adonis to his divine lover
Was colder, Königsmarck, than you to a friend.
Well, we play high at Monplaisir. Young gentlemen
Of a prudent disposition do avoid us,
Having emptied a purse or two——

Königsmarck. Body of Bacchus!
I am not such. I'll treble all your stakes
To-night if you will——

Platen. Oh, 'tis a revel to-night!
God knows what you would think——

Königsmarck. For what do you take me?
A puling girl?

Platen. You have a girl's complexion.

Königsmarck. My looks belie my age and disposition,
If you speak truth. To-night, then, at Monplaisir.

Platen. Nay, softly, in your ear. Not at Monplaisir.
To-night we sup at the Castle behind the Mill,
I and some intimates. Do you know the place?
An old, grey, solitary tower, private
And homely. You will come?

Königsmarck. Madam, my sister
Rode hither in my coach——

Platen. Let her return
Without you. Come! I am alone in mine
And frightened in the dark.

Königsmarck. I will be with you.

Platen. [*Aside to SCHULENBURG.*]
What did I say? If Königsmarck is mortal
I win—I win—I win!

Schulenburg. But not my necklet.
I would not take your wager. Hush! They are going.
[*The Electoral party go out, followed by the rest of the Court.*]

Platen. [*To KÖNIGSMARCK.*] Shall we go?

Königsmarck. [*Offering his hand.*]
To the Castle behind the Mill!

[*They go out laughing. The hall is left empty except for lacqueys, who begin putting out the lights. HILDEBRAND comes in looking for KÖNIGSMARCK's lute, which is left in a corner of the hall. He takes it up and sings. The lights are put out one by one as he leaves the hall singing—*

*Suddenly her heart began
To beat, for she saw the steps of a man.
Trembling from the ground she caught her
And followed them along the lonely sand.*

*They ended where a great stone
Like a ruined tower stood alone,
At the blind gate she marked more clearly
The track, for in every step was blood.*

SCENE III.

The PRINCESS'S apartment, with windows opening on to a balcony.

PRINCE MAX, AURORA VON KÖNIGSMARCK and other ladies and gentlemen sitting and standing round the window and in the balcony. KÖNIGSMARCK, haggard and carelessly dressed, leaning over the balcony. The PRINCESS within the room, half reclining on a couch. LEONORA VON KNESEBECK at her side. The noise of an assembling crowd comes up from below.

A Young Lady. And shall we see Prince Charles at the head of all his soldiers?

Prince Max. No my child, they will show us only the ones that are fit to be shown. My brother is taking the ugliest men in Germany with him to frighten the Turks. That is why Monsieur de Königsmarck and I are not going.

Königsmarck. *Diantre*, Prince! How do you know Monsieur de Königsmarck is not going?

Prince Max. Because you have a loose garter, a soiled ruffle, and your cravat awry. This is the trim of a lover, but it is not one my father would suffer in a Hanoverian soldier.

Königsmarck. I do not dress to please you or any other prince.

Prince Max. No, nor princess either—but to please the young, the fair, the virtuous lady of Monplaisir.

A Lady. And of the Castle behind the Mill.

Enter PRINCE ERNEST.

Prince Ernest. Ladies and gentlemen, if you are not tired of waiting yet you will be presently. There is some delay,

God knows what, and Prince Charles bids me tell you it will be another hour before the troops will be ready to march. Meantime I would have you know there is a Frenchman here with the prettiest performing dogs that ever I saw ; and if you will do me the favour to come to my apartments, where they now are, I promise you shall weep for laughing. [*Aside to the PRINCESS.*] Sister, Charles desires one more word with you before he leaves, and would not find you with company.

Prince Max. Well thought on, boy! To the dogs, to the dogs! Sister, you must come too. This will be a cure for the *migraine*.

Princess. I thank you, brother, I will stay here. I am not well.

Prince Ernest. Indeed you do look pale. Gracious ladies, noble gentlemen, I invite the whole company to my apartments.

SCENE IV.

The same. The PRINCESS on the couch. LEONORA VON KNESEBECK.

Leonora. [*With solicitude.*] Madam, can I do nothing?

Princess. Nothing, Leonora.

[*LEONORA retires to an embroidery frame, and works.*

KONIGSMARCK enters unannounced and stands beside the door. The PRINCESS opens her eyes, sees him, then starts up on the couch.

Princess. You here? What do you want, my lord?

Königsmarck.

A jewel

I have lost, Madam.

[*LEONORA rises and goes on to the balcony, as though seeking for the jewel. KÖNIGSMARCK remains standing by the door.*

Königsmarck. [*Suddenly.*] By Heaven, I want no jewel !
I want one word of pardon.

Princess. Pardon, Count ?
You sin, but who would dare affirm you sin
Against me ?

Königsmarck. I could answer all my sins,
The ignoble common sins of all my life
Were against you.

There's answer more immediate.
You have an enemy : being ignorant of it,
I was her friend.

You have a mortal enemy. I—O treason
Mortal beyond her hate !—I am her lover.

Princess. Is this your news, my lord ?
Why, it is old, older than yesterday.

Königsmarck. Yesterday ? Older than a hundred
years.

Were we not friends before ?

Princess. Perchance we were.
Well-counselling Time brings us considered changes.
You do wisely,
Having to choose between my crowned nullity
And her substantial power, to set your fortune
Where it may most abound.

Sir, you do wisely.

I am a shadow, not a woman, a slave,
Or God knows what, for if I were a woman—

Young fair women
Are loved when first men marry them, but I
Was always hated.

It seems you have no affection for me. Well,
Why should you have ? My father does not love me,
Or even pity now. Yet you remember,
Formerly he adored me.

My very mother has denied me mercy,
And God and man alike are grown incapable

Of care for one made a mysterious outcast
From those deep laws and charities of love
Which do protect our souls.

Farewell, my lord :

It is most natural that you also leave me.

Königsmarck. Madam—dear lady—

Pray you, most dear lady, be comforted.

Some of us have done ill. The unworthy Prince—

We are all unworthy—yet there's Charles, your brother,

And the Elector favours you——

Princess.

The Elector

Is clay in Platen's hand : ay, the same Platen

Who is your mistress too.

Königsmarck.

Highness, have mercy——

Princess. Mock me not with the terms of royalty—

Her prisoner !

I only asked reprieve.

The smart of wrong, the sleepless haunting passion

And ever-during madness of my misery,

Make me to fear. I ask a moment's shelter

From the storm and driving ruin of my soul ;

The anodyne of an old quiet castle,

Home and familiar things.

But the wise, good Platen

Counsels I shall not go—and she's omnipotent.

She'll not consent I breathe an instant air

Untainted by her presence, live one hour

Forgetful of her and her friends.

What make you,

Königsmarck, here with me ? Go, you have chosen,

You have done wisely, you are prudent.

Königsmarck.

No !

I am a monster, but not prudent, no !

A madman happier bound and scourged with iron

Than free to his own madness.

Say I am infamous,

But never say of Königsmarck, "he was wise."

Princess. What else? You love this woman?

Königsmarck. Platen? Gods!

Princess. Yet you are Platen's lover. I cannot understand—

Königsmarck. Do not, my Princess.

Yet could you understand! O for some word
 Sharper than knives, more strong than forked lightning
 That tears the iron heart of the oak, so might I
 Show you my naked soul, and you forever
 Must apprehend it yours!

There's no such word,

Only such syllables as men have lied with
 From immemorial time, and credulous women
 Have brought into contempt.

I'll not defend myself.

I would die for you and know you'll not believe it.

Princess. O speak, and I will hear you!

Königsmarck. Shall I speak?

Then 'tis yourself, your all but perfect self
 And the one blot on your brightness I accuse.
 You are capricious past all privilege
 Of womankind, your moods are more inconstant
 Than the chameleon's colour, more deceiving
 Than April sun, the sharp wind's playfellow.

Princess. I am capricious, proud, most blameworthy.

Königsmarck. I said so?

Princess.

It is true.

Königsmarck.

O what a villain!

Do not forgive me!

Never pardon me.

[*The PRINCESS is weeping, KÖNIGSMARCK kneels beside her and kisses her hands. PRINCE CHARLES has entered, and stands looking at them.*]

Charles.

Never on your life!

Put enmity, calumnious words, revenge
 Between you, but not pardon.

To whom shall I speak ?

Which of you entreat, saying, "Forbear to ruin
One whom I love so well ?"

Königsmarck, my sister has no consolation
For all her sad youth, loveless, uncherished,
But innocence.

She has no arms against her mortal enemy
But innocence,

No spell to hush her own unquiet spirit
But quiet innocence.

Königsmarck. My Prince, you are in error, you wrong her
Highness.

Princess. Brother, I protest——

Charles. Away with protestations !

I speak to you as a dying man, for certainly
I think I never shall return. The needle
Is drawn to the Pole, and I am drawn as surely
To some unvisited place my star looked down on
When I was born, saying, "Thou shalt have his blood."

Princess. Alas, dear Charles !

Charles. The time is very short.

I brought you hither, Königsmarck, I bid you
For friendship's sake, and for love's sake, depart.
Look, I speak plainly. Leave this honoured lady,
Your love dishonours, this unhappy woman
Your consolations kill.

Princess. Brother, how wildly
Do you mistake, imagining this man loves me,
Who is the Platen's lover.

Charles. Ay, that reptile,
That beast of fierce embrace and venomous mouth
Hangs coiled about him ; your most deadly danger.
Ay, she is fatal, if Fate herself were other.

Königsmarck. Sir, not falsely
You judged, pronouncing that I love this lady.
I have loved her all my life, and dare to say so

Now that she'll not believe it. Nevertheless,
I come to bid farewell. I have determined
To march with you to the Morea.

Charles.

Philip !

Well done ! At last, well done !

Königsmarck.

I will rejoin you

In two days' time.

Charles.

Nay, the resolve was sudden,
As sudden be fulfilment. Hildebrand
Can follow with your gear, ay, Hildebrand
Knows all you need—but do you, Philip,
To horse and ride with me.

Königsmarck.

Madam—farewell.

Princess. You will go instantly ?

Königsmarck.

Highness—farewell.

Charles. Adieu, my sister,

Heaven be your help, angels your comforters.

I have loved you well.

Princess. Brother, sweet brother, adieu ! God speed you
both !

Königsmarck—sir, adieu.

Leonora. Dear Highness, my lord Count,

Heaven prosper you !

Charles and Königsmarck. Ladies, all thanks. Farewell.

[PRINCE CHARLES and KÖNIGSMARCK go out.]

SCENE V.

The same. *The PRINCESS and LEONORA v. KNESEBECK.*

Leonora. Loss on the heels of loss, grief upon grief !

Princess.

Hush, Leonora !

All those black-winged sorrows

That preyed upon my heart, in a flight are gone.

Philomel sits there

Piercing the dark with strong melodious cries,
A triumphing grief
More exquisite than all sharp visible joys
That revel up the blue.

[*A silence, during which the noise of the crowd without increases. There is a sound of marching, words of command, and military music. LEONORA goes on to the balcony.*

Leonora. [*Returning.*]

Platen and the Elector, coming hither !

Princess. [*Hastily rising.*]

Some Barbary water for my eyes ! The rouge !
Quick, child ! Pin up these curls—the Alençon lace !
Tire me thus carelessly, 'twill lend a shadow
To hide the stain of weeping. Dost thou come
To witness my despair ? Come, Jezebel !

Enter the ELECTOR and MADAME PLATEN, accompanied by ladies and gentlemen.

Elector. Give you good day, Highness !
How goes it, daughterling ? What ? Sickly, sadly ?
Diantre ! but every prince goes once to the wars,
And why not Charles ? Do him a world of good.
Do you want a man at mother's apron-string
The whole of his life ? Do you or don't you, eh ?
That's what I say to the Electress. She's a-bed,
Lest folks should see her weep.

Madame Platen. The Princess of Hanover
Is public in her grief.

Princess. For what cause, Madam,
Should I conceal it ?

Elector. [*Stepping into the balcony.*]
Ladies, a brave show,
And will be braver presently.

Madame Platen. [*To the PRINCESS.*]
In your ear, Madam,
The world—be assured I do not credit it—

But the scandalous world whispers your brother Charles
Loves you much more than brotherly.

Princess. Your world
Of Monplaisir. Did I concern myself,
My world and I, with all the scandalous comments
Of yours, I must become like a waxen image
Carried at my burial—nor yet avoid them.
Truly the princes, all save one, do love me.
Poor fortuneless gentlemen! What would you with them
At Monplaisir?

Madame Platen. Madam, I say your grief
Is too great for the circumstance. I warn you,
Being experienced, as an elder sister might——

Princess. An elder, truly.

Madame Platen. Pfui! your easy jibe!
I keep no calendar, my years are counted
On a rosary of lovers' vows, and verily
It has lately lengthened.

[*A loud burst of military music from without.*]

Elector. Hasten, ladies! Hither!

[*All crowd to the balcony and the window. The PRINCESS remains at the back of the party, somewhat within the window. There is a sound of marching, the rattle of arms, cheers and music.*]

Elector. Ay, my stout Hanoverians! There be soldiers!
Clockwork upon the march, stubborn in battle.
Look at their uniform! That's worth the money
The Emperor paid for the lot. Hang 'em, they're cheap.
I put the price too low. Yonder's Prince Charles,
A brave boy when all's said—my son.

Madame Platen. Your Highness,
The House of Hanover breeds heroes.

Elector. Soldiers.

A Lady. Königsmarck rides with him.

Madame Platen. Not Königsmarck!

Elector. 'Tis he. A sudden freak—the Prince desired it,

And the Electress, therefore I gave permission.

He goes with the Prince.

Madame Platen.

He accompanies his Highness

To the coast?

Elector.

He sails with him for the Morea.

Madame Platen. For the Morea? Königsmarck? Impossible!

Elector. I say the Morea. He is young, adventurous——

Yielded awhile perhaps to women's tears,

Now takes the key of the fields.

[*Taking snuff.*]

Upon my soul,

I admire him for't.

Madame Platen.

I tell you it is senseless,

Incomprehensible, mad!

Give me my mantle!

Here's cold that freezes to the marrow.

[*Returns to the room and draws the PRINCESS aside.*]

You!

Your doing! You send Königsmarck to the war,

Without one word, one farewell, you remorselessly

Doom him to die, to punish me——

Princess.

Peace, Madam.

For shame! What influence have I on your friends?

Your loves do not concern me.

Silence! The Elector

Observes your conduct.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The Hall of Knights in the Leine Palais. A large fireplace with a chimney-piece supported by carved figures of Knights. A door opening into a corridor which leads to the PRINCESS OF HANOVER's apartments. The ELECTRESS sitting beside the fire, BARONESS V. HEINEBURG in attendance. Enter LEONORA V. KNESEBECK.

Electress. The Princess is awake ?

Leonora. Madam, her slumber
Is deep as death. For many months her bed
Has been a place of tears, of moaning dreams
Nothing might dispossess. Now some three hours
She has lain in a motionless slumber, unprepared,
Fallen upon her couch. I dare not waken her,
And could not if I would.

Electress. Let her sleep, Knesebeck.

[LEONORA goes out.]

Ah, youth, youth, youth ! Such is thy privilege.
Poignant and long the anguish, but in the end
The physician finds thee. All our consolations,
Our anxious care, our pity are for thee,
Not for incurable, aged woe, irretrievable,
Naked loss.

O wisdom of the world, blinder than justice,
More to be praised, thou verily judgest well,
Leaving things remediless where Life and Nature
Leave them—to the obliteration of slow time
And quiet cure of Death.

Baroness. Highness, dear lady,
If you have lost a son, yet excellent princes
Remain to serve you and your country.

Electress. Mine ?
My country is that England whose high throne
My blood, having no lower spring, aspired to
And must no more aspire. The child of Denmark
Lives to inherit folly——

Baroness. And a throne
Bloody and perilous.

Electress. Peace my poor Heineburg,
You chatter ignorantly.

Baroness. A score of years
I have served your Highness, nor have been found un-
faithful

Or any way unworthy ; but the Princess of Hanover,
Whom once you did abhor, is the sole creature
Whose comfort now pleases you.

Electress. 'Tis her sorrow
Pleases me.

Enter PRINCE ERNEST.

Ernest. Where is the Electress ?

Electress. Here.

Son, you bear news—'tis of your brother. Speak it
Immediately.

Ernest. My dearest, honoured mother,
Call up your resolution.

Electress. Charles is dead.

Ernest. Fallen in the front of battle, as became him,
Him and our illustrious House. I pray of Heaven
To die no worse.

Electress. Ay, thus it was reported,
And then another rumour. I'll have no rumours,
But certainty.

Ernest. Madam, a broken remnant
Of our destroyed army, landing at Venice,
Despatched a courier ; but out-posting him
A gentleman, one that our Charles affectioned,
Königsmarck, has arrived.

Electress. So ! Let him enter.

[LEONORA VON KNESEBECK *enters while PRINCE ERNEST is speaking. He goes out and returns immediately with KÖNIGSMARCK, who is in a riding-dress. He kneels and kisses the ELECTRESS's hand.*

Königsmarck. Your pardon, Highness !

Electress. For what offence, my lord ?

Königsmarck. That I unworthy live, while one so noble
On earth is seen no more.

Electress. You were his friend ;
'Tis to be well esteemed.

Some have reported

He was a prisoner.

Königsmarck. There were no prisoners.
Fierce, overwhelming, sudden was the onslaught,
I saw our amazed van reel, smitten backward,
Bear backward in a bloody wild confusion
Our deep arrayed host, until one leader,
One man appeared to arrest, bear up and onward
Our stream of war : the Prince.

Impetuous rivers
Thus for an hour dispute with waves of the sea
The barren empery of the blown sand
And long rock-edges white with rage of waters
Roaring right up to heaven. So I beheld
The tossed front of battle, smoke and steel,
Banner and turban of the infidel,
And still our leader ;
Then one huge billow of wrath,
One roar out-bellowing tumult—and the end.
The Prince had fallen.

Electress. You—you found his body ?

Königsmarck. Myself had perished there, but a faithful
trooper

Swung me across his steed, bloody and senseless,
And bore me among shepherds, Christian folk
Hidden among the hills. They stealing down
To the battle-field, brought back the Prince's body
And there interred it. Madam, he sleeps well.
A priest hath blest his bed, holier in nakedness
Than robed prelates, the broader benediction
Of the watching hills that wait the gradual stars,
Holding their silence all the day, is o'er him,
And the sweet spare grey thyme.
For sentry in that mountain solitude
The brown shepherd stands leaning on his staff,
A motionless bronze : nothing appears to live

Except the climbing sheep. Thus I beheld it
Under the broad clear eye of the March morn,
And bade his rest farewell.

Electress. You have brought nothing
That was my son's ?

Königsmarck. Highness, a lock of hair.

[*He draws out a folded handkerchief containing a lock of*
PRINCE CHARLES'S hair and gives it to the ELECTRESS.

Leonora. Alas, dear Prince !

Electress. Ever the dearest and the best are taken.

Baroness. A prince beloved by all that looked on him !

Electress. [*To KÖNIGSMARCK.*] You have our thanks for
these last offices.

Pardon me, Sir, I cannot think of much—

I would say more—but I am ill. Your arm,

Ernest. [*She rises unsteadily.*] Attend me to my chamber,

Baroness,

You also, Kneesebeck——

[*The ELECTRESS goes out supported by PRINCE ERNEST and*
attended by the two ladies. KÖNIGSMARCK leans by
the hearth, in the shadow of the chimney-piece. Twi-
light is falling. The PRINCESS OF HANOVER enters
hastily.

Princess. Where is the Electress ?

[*She advances looking round her.*

*Leonora !—*What, all dark ?

How long have you let me sleep !

Königsmarck. [*To himself.*] Dear God ! Herself !

[*He steps out from the shadow of the chimney-piece. The*
PRINCESS gazes at him in silence, pressing her hand to
her forehead.

Princess. No, it is not a dream, neither is it madness.

I have demanded this with incantations

Of deep heart-stirring groans and urgent whispers

In the black void of midnight.

Shall I now be afraid ?

[*To Königsmarck.*] Yea, I have summoned thee, I have obtained thee,

Dragged thee at length out of the abyss, perchance

Disturbed thy rest—but O I had no rest!

I longed so much to say, "I pardon thee,"

To say, "I—" but what art thou, Königsmarck?

Do I dream? Art thou yet living?

Königsmarck. [*Falling on his knee.*] My—my Princess!

Princess. Thou livest—thou yet livest?

Königsmarck. [*Rising.*] And Charles is dead.

Princess. They told me Charles and all his officers
Were dead. Forgive me, I am mad with grief—

I take you for Count Königsmarck.

Königsmarck. I am he,

Touch me, I am a living man.

Why do you tremble

And fear this flesh who did not fear to summon

The unbodied ghost? I am he thou didst demand,

Compel from the vague bound and portal of Death

Back to the unquiet world.

Ay, it was thou!

What wouldst thou of me? Speak to the returned
spirit

Here, in a narrow space, 'twixt life and death

Where we are poised a moment, unabiding

As thistle-down, as foam that winds of the sea

Drive ineluctably on.

Utter what is in thy heart, or being silent,

Never again either in flesh or spirit,

Living or dead, in the false antic day

Or true obscure night, call thou on Königsmarck,

For never will he come.

Princess. Ill didst thou do, O thou didst pierce my
heart!

But I have pardoned thee a million times

And washed thee white with tears.

Königsmarck. My blood should pay them,
Drop after drop. Yet hast thou more to say—
“I pardon thee, I ——”?

Princess. Love thee, *Königsmarck.*

Königsmarck. Child, thou adored child !
Is it possible ? Dost thou indeed love me ?

Some day thou wilt be sorry.

Princess. Now I defy my fate, I have spoken this once—

Philip, I love thee.

It bursts out of my dark and hidden heart
More sudden, dear and fresh than the first flowers

Break from the wintry earth—

How I do love thee !

Surely 'tis sweet to hear, being to utter

Immeasurably sweet.

Königsmarck. So dear a word, so wonderful and rich

Past all imagined utterance, so angelical

Thou dost appear an angel speaking it ;

Yet here devils will answer

And tongues of Hell echo it about the world.

Princess. I did believe you loved me——

Königsmarck.

Do my pulses

Beat in the accustomed places ? Do I breathe ?

I have loved you all my life, so dearly well,

So much that were your words each mortal daggers

I'd take them in my heart and die rejoicing,

My blood singing your beauty.

Were we a dream, canopied by dim night,

I should go mad with rapture hearing you

And wake myself with weeping ; but all's true

And a frosty fear——

Princess. How, *Königsmarck* ?—a fear ?

Königsmarck. Because I cannot fear or man or devil

I am afraid. Love, I shall be your ruin.

Princess. Ah no, no, no ! Only this once

Shall I talk with you of love ; never again

In all the lapse of time. We have much to say,
We who have waited so long, we who have wasted
Inestimable hours. One perilous moment
Wherein all must be told or pass unuttered,
Ungessed, unmourned down the deep gulf of Time !—
Yet I say nothing, and thou'lt never know
How well I could have loved thee had my stars
Been pitiful.

Königsmarck. Give me your hands, your eyes—

What need of utterance ?

I drink deep draughts of shining love.

Come hither, [*Drawing her before the hearth.*]

Where I may feast my heart upon that face

And on the stuff of my mortality

Grave it too deep for death.

How beautiful thou art !

Princess.

Love, I am glad.

Königsmarck. When didst thou love me first ?

Princess.

I cannot tell,

Sure a long while.

Königsmarck. Thou didst forbear to love me

A weary while, hard wert thou in the winning,

But when thou givest thyself 'tis done right royally,

Even as the prize is royal. When did thy soul,

Thy stubborn soul first own the mastery

Of sovereign Love ?

Princess.

'Twas on a certain night

I am fain not to remember.

Königsmarck.

That same night

You frowned on me ?

Princess.

Hush ! There are many thoughts

Which slumber lightly here—do not awaken them,

For I would pack my recollection full

Of this one perfect hour, of this one moment,

And make it all my life.

I never was alive till now, and afterwards

I shall be dead, but in my sepulchre
Let me be hymning joy because I lived

Once, thus in thine arms.

Königsmarck. Live happily and longer than thou bodest.
Here will I charm away unhappy thoughts
With one touch of my magic on thy brow,
Thus with a little rain of tender charms
Forbid these eyes to tears.

[*Sounds without the door. KÖNIGSMARCK stands away from the PRINCESS.*

Königsmarck. I know you, Madam,
Eager to hear the last sad history
Of our renowned Prince——

[*Enter lacqueys carrying lighted candles in heavy silver candelabra. They are followed by a Major-domo and*

LEONORA V. KNESEBECK.

Leonora.

Count Königsmarck !

SCENE II.

The garden at Herrenhausen, as before. It is dusk on a warm summer evening. A large moon is rising ; the terrace and gardens are illuminated with coloured lamps, and there is a distant sound of music. Bands of maskers in dominos, some carrying torches, come along the terrace, descend the steps and pass out of sight in the garden. They sing.

First band of maskers.

In the cool young dawn of the summer morn

Fresh buds open fairest——

Come away !——

But every scent that yields content

At eventide is rarest.

Come away !

Now the evening closes.

Second band.

Under the moon over petals strewn
 Wander souls of roses,
 In the alleys dim where the fountains brim
 Softly they are sighing.
 Come away !
 Now the dusk is dying.

Third band.

Under the moon in a night of June
 —Such a night as this is—
 They are fluttering free from the red rose tree
 And falling there in kisses.
 Come away ! Come away !

LEONORA VON KNESEBECK, *in mask and domino, detaches herself from the last band of maskers as they pass and waits under the terrace. A band of revellers, without dominos, come in dancing. They bring music with them and sing as they dance.*

Viol and flute
 No more be mute,
 Come dancing, dancing, dancing !
 Fa la la !
 Mark the measure !
 Here is pleasure !
 Praise no longer love and wine,
 Cupid's bow or Bacchus' vine,
 I'd give them both for dancing !
 Fa la la !
 Topers you
 Join not our crew,
 Who trip and fleet
 On airy feet
 And wings of music dancing.
 Fa la la !

Lovers who
Two and two
Wander lost in charmed gazing,
Not for you the flute is phrasing
Fairy calls across the dew.
Here no sighing fancy fools us,
Only merry music rules us,
Flying here and there pursuing,
Only true to music's wooing,
Side by side
We sway and glide,
Now we link and now divide,
We smiling serve,
And gaily swerve
From fair to fair in dancing.

Fa la la !
Lightly trip,
Hand on hip,
She who's featest
Shall be sweetest
Beauty's brows out-shining.
Now again
Link the chain
One with other swiftly twining,
Ring on ring
Wind and swing,
Slower now, round around,
Till our woven maze unwound,
Hand in hand
We revellers stand
And sing the praise of dancing.
Fa la la !

KÖNIGSMARCK *is among the dancers. As they pass out he detaches himself from them and remains behind. When all are gone except KÖNIGSMARCK, LEONORA steps forward, removing her mask.*

Leonora. Count Königsmarck.

Königsmarck.

It is you, dear Confidante ?

Leonora. Whom else might you suppose ?

Königsmarck.

My dearer lady.

Leonora. The Princess ?

Königsmarck.

Hush ! Her name is Léonisse.

Leonora. How poorly do you think of Léonisse,
Who imagine her creeping disguised in the dark
To meet a midnight lover !

Königsmarck.

She repents

That ever she did love me.

Leonora.

She repent ?

Ah, no, no, no ! Unweariedly
As the nightingale echoes her own long cry,
Her everlasting passionate appeal
To enveloping night and the removed stars,
Thus would your Léonisse reiterate
Her dear denial.

Königsmarck. Tell her who yet loves me
Four words with her, only four little words
I supplicate, dream of like famishing men
Who dream of banqueting.

Leonora.

A worthy lover

Of Léonisse would find in sheer obedience
And recollection feasts.

Königsmarck.

A worthy lover ?

The armed angels, Heaven's bright counsellors,
Michael and Gabriel are forbid to woo her ;
Therefore her lover must be man. By God,
He were much less who'd bear these prohibitions,
These childish blank evasions !

Madame la Princesse

Plays at the princely tables ; Königsmarck
Must every night be there, to bow and pass,
And pace the corridor, tearing his ruffles
For very rage—the Venice point ones, Madam.
Nay, but this passes jesting.

She talks with God knows whom, but not with me,
Smiles on the universe, but not on me,
Plunges those lovely looks in other eyes,
But not in mine.

Leonora. How answers Léonisse ?
At morning she awakes, and hears the day
Beginning and is glad.

Your Léonisse
Says to her love : " How fair is the green earth
Because it holds thy heart ! " Says to her love,
" How triumphingly the hours
Clamour from tower to tower, because they lead
In glad procession again the bridal hour
We meet, only we two in all the crowd ! "

Königsmarck. Meet ! Unendurable torture !

Leonora. Léonisse
Says to her love, " How beautiful is the world,
Because it holds our hearts ! "
Have you no happy word for Léonisse ?

Königsmarck. Tell her—your chains are cruel, Léonisse,
Heavy, cutting the flesh, say that I wear them
In mortal anguish, and unspeakable joy.
Stay, stay, Leonora ! Tell, if one dare tell her,
Nightly I watch her window, blind and blank
And hopeless as my heart. But once in a dream
I saw a curtain suddenly drawn, I saw
A lamp in the window. Then with winged feet
I flew alone the way I went with Charles,
Up through the postern door, by the Hall of Knights,
And found the Princess. This was but a dream,
Yet should she need me—then remember it,
I am there and have the means to enter.

Say——

Leonora. [*Replacing her mask.*]
Dominos on the terrace ! Let me hence !
Farewell, Count Königsmarck—I shall remember.

[KÖNIGSMARCK and LEONORA go away in opposite directions. While they have been talking MADAME PLATEN has approached along the terrace above, followed by MESBACH. Both are in dominos.]

Madame Platen. Hush ! Who is the domino yonder ?

Mesbach.

Who ?

Dear Madame Platen, I am no magician !

Madame Platen. 'Tis not the Princess, Mesbach ?

Mesbach.

No, that's certain,

I'll swear to that.

Madam, you are obeyed.

I have easily obtained her Highness' domino

And gloves, thrown off, and left just where she flung them.

Madame Platen. A careless fool ! I half suspected her
Of some deep plan. Ay, there's her domino !

Blue with a scarlet broidery, unmistakable

Even in the dusk. Her gloves, richly embroidered

With the arms of Hanover, the Prince's present

To his dear spouse. Fortune, my deity,

Be favourable now to thy rash votaress

But half an hour ! So may we make innocuous

For all her days the insolent Frenchwoman,

The brat of Zell !

Mesbach.

And this unmannered Swede,

This Königsmarck—— ?

Madame Platen.

Will be well caught.

Speed, Mesbach !

The Prince is yonder, drinking in the pavilion,

Königsmarck's near, walking alone. Deliver him

A message in a feigned voice, this glove

[Giving MESBACH the PRINCESS'S glove.]

Give him for token. Say a lady sent it

Who awaits him eagerly on the marble seat

Under the terrace. Then haste to the Prince,

Persuade him presently by some device

To walk with others on the terrace. There

I warrant they'll see sport, if you'll but carelessly
Rap with your cane upon the balustrade
When near enough to mark the scarlet broidery
On this loving lady's domino.

Mesbach. And if

Our Königsmarck swallow the bait.

Madame Platen. Begone

And do your part featly, as I'll do mine.

[*MESBACH goes out. MADAME PLATEN takes off her domino and replaces it by that of the PRINCESS OF HANOVER. She comes down from the terrace, seats herself on the marble bench below it and puts on her mask. HILDEBRAND, who has observed her, himself unobserved, passes in a domino, playing on the viol.*]

Hildebrand. [Singing.]

*At eve the spinners tell beside the doorway
Of evil spirits and their accursed love,
Fiercer than hate. Close well the curtains,
For the moon—and what beside?—is awake.*

[*He goes out singing in the direction whence KÖNIGSMARCK presently enters, holding the PRINCESS'S glove in his hand.*]

Königsmarck. You have summoned me, Madam—and with
all speed
I have obeyed.

[*MADAME PLATEN sighs and remains silent.*]

With what commands——?

Madame Platen. [Holding out the fellow glove to that he has in his hand and speaking in a whisper.]

You know it not,

The token?

Königsmarck. On the Electress' honoured hand
I have seen a glove——

Madame Platen. The Electress, Königsmarck!
You must be mad!

Königsmarck. Clearly mistaken, Madam.

Madame Platen. Some threescore years of frozen majesty
You flew to embrace——!

Königsmarck. Heaven be my witness——

Madame Platen. Hardly!

Is there no younger lovelier lady, *Königsmarck*,
May wear the arms of Hanover?

Königsmarck. I know one
That has adorned the arms of Hanover,
Whose white hand wields the power of Hanover,
Who therefore well might wear on that white hand
The coat of Hanover—*Clara von Platen.*

Madame Platen. Philip, you have guessed well. O my
fond heart,

My vainly kind, impassioned, faithful heart!

Königsmarck. Madam, you have been too generous——

Madame Platen. To an unthankful man——

Königsmarck. For your own fortunes.
Consider and recall your wonted wisdom
And famed prudence. Let no imagined rivalry
Fanning to fire some cooled embers, cause you
Forget your real interests.

Why do I speak?

I am your jest, accomplished friend. You have heard—
Thought to discover me in folly, Madam,
And read me a friend's lesson. Well, I thank you,
Although I need it not.

Madame Platen. You judge me rightly.
Rumour affirms you have refused obedience
To a royal summons, bidding you return
To Sweden and your estate, or else stand forfeit
Of all your lands—this for a woman's sake.

Königsmarck. Do they say that?
True, I will not yield to the King and sacrifice
My liberty, light, and the whole dear world
To be mewed up in dark at his good pleasure,

Among mere savages. But—for a woman ?
 Madam, we of the court, can we believe
 There lives or man or woman whose possession
 Is worth to us more than prosperity,
 Ambition, ease, riches and whole estate ?
 We fall not in such error.

Platen.

Do we not ?

Königsmarck.

You, Madam, put a period

To our old brief amour when the Elector
 Conceived but a suspicion.

Madame Platen.

Nay, not I !

Were you afraid ? O not my founded fortunes,
 Which I with my own hand know to defend
 Against all challengers, you so considered,
 But for yourself you feared ! Count Königsmarck,
 You yet may find basely to have betrayed
 A heart like mine more perilous to your fortunes
 Than to outbrave the Elector.

Königsmarck.

Lady, you are angry,

And talk beneath yourself.

Platen.

O this hushed heat,

This brooding thunder ! It plays upon the nerves— !
 Count, you speak wisely.

*[Listening, she hears footsteps approaching along the terrace
 above, and a light rapping on the balustrade.]*

Women of the world

Accept and leave like partners in the dance
 Their lovers, yet like partners in the dance,
 Not without courtesies. The courtesies
 Of love are kisses, Königsmarck, and thus,

[Flinging her arms round his neck.]

For the last time and for remembrance sake
 I kiss a mouth once dear.

*[The PRINCE OF HANOVER, PLATEN and MESBACH
 have approached along the terrace and look down upon
 the pair.]*

Prince.

So ! Here's your pair !

[MADAME PLATEN, dropping the PRINCESS's glove on the ground, hastens away down an alley.

Prince. After the lady, Mesbach !

[He climbs over the balustrade and drops on his feet in front of KÖNIGSMARCK.

Ha ! *Mille diables !*

We have caught you, Königsmarck, ay, and caught her, Though she bolted like a rabbit.

Königsmarck.

I assure your Highness

You are most opportune, though sudden, by Bacchus, In your arrival.

Prince.

Curse your impudence !

She was in your arms.

Königsmarck.

Would she had been in yours, Electoral Highness !

Prince.

Hell and damnation, Sir !

Platen, I say ! Listen to him, friend Platen !

[COUNT VON PLATEN having descended from the terrace by the steps, approaches the PRINCE.

He holds my wife in his arms, under my eyes,

I say he holds the Princess——

Königsmarck.

How ? The Princess ?

Pardon me, Highness, that extreme of honour Has not been mine. The Princess ! Well, to-morrow Your Highness will be sorry—or have forgotten This freak of your French wine.

Prince.

Insolent foreigner !

Platen, he denies it was the Princess.

Königsmarck.

Diantre !

I do deny it.

Count v. Platen. Very naturally,

Inevitably, I may say—— Be calm, Highness, I implore. But, Sir, the domino Was unmistakable. What lady of the court Wears such another ? Who would dare to take Her Highness' domino ?

Königsmarck. That, Sir's, a riddle
To which yourself may know the answer, I——
Do not.

[The PRINCE has picked up the PRINCESS's glove, thrown down by MADAME PLATEN, and examined it by a lamp. He holds it out to KÖNIGSMARCK.]

Prince. Here is proof positive. Look at this glove.
Your domino, your masked *bona roba*
Dropped it.

Königsmarck. A glove with the arms of Hanover,
Such as the Prince uses to give. Why, then
'Tis like some *bona roba* had it, which
Your Highness may decide.

Prince. Out, damned liar !
This glove I gave the Princess.

[Drawing his sword.]

Königsmarck. Didst thou so ?
Then did the Princess from a hand too white
To wear such soilure, thus contemptuously
[Flinging the scabbard from his sword] dismiss it.

Prince. I have done with words. On guard !

[The PRINCE and KÖNIGSMARCK begin to fight. COUNT PLATEN endeavours to intervene without coming within reach of their swords.]

Count v. Platen. Electoral Highness ! Prince ! Now in
God's name
Down with your sword, cursed traitor !
Murderer ! Help !

Prince. Peace, fool ! I want no help.

[MESBACH comes in and throws himself upon KÖNIGSMARCK.]

Prince. [Lowering his sword.] Mesbach, let go !

Count v. Platen. [Holding the PRINCE.]

Pardon my violence, Highness !
[To MESBACH.] You have found the lady ?

Prince. Ay, what of the lady ?
You overtook her ?

Mesbach. No, she has disappeared
Utterly, Highness.

Prince. Disappeared! The domino
Has disappeared, Mesbach, but here's the lady,
The unabashed lady!

*Enter the PRINCESS OF HANOVER and PRINCE ERNEST, without
masks or dominos.*

Prince. [To the PRINCESS.]
Madam, you are bold ; or else you are uncertain
Whether you were detected. Yes, we saw you,
Three of us recognised you plainly. Caught,
Madame la Princesse!

Princess. [To PRINCE ERNEST.]
What does his Highness say ?
Methinks his wine babbles.

Königsmarck. Madam, let me answer.
A woman foolish or confederate
With your Highness' enemies, dared to assume
Your domino. After some compliments
As though in jest, she embraced me suddenly
And fled ; just as by a most singular hazard,
The Prince and these obsequious gentlemen
Appeared to witness our endearments.

Prince. So !
You've got your story, Madam. Swear to it,
Or do not swear—'tis of no consequence.
Three of us marked you hanging on his neck.
Did we not, Platen ? Mesbach ?

Count v. Platen. Most unhappily,
And to our amazed grief.

Mesbach. It was the Princess.
I'll stake my honour on that.

Princess. M. de Mesbach
Has staked his honour !

Prince Ernest. When did this happen ?

Königsmarck. Not fifteen minutes ago.

Prince Ernest. The Princess of Hanover
Has been unmasked, undominoed in my company
An hour by the clock.

Prince. A brave boy ! Be her witness,
Perjure thy soul to spite thy brother—— !

Enter the ELECTOR and MADAME PLATEN.

Elector. Quarrelling !
On this delightful evening ! Shame, young people !

Prince Ernest. Highness and honoured Father, here's a
conspiracy

Against our Sophie. The Prince dares to affirm
He and his hirelings saw her with Count Königsmarck.

Prince. We saw her in a domino, kissing Königsmarck
Here where I stand.

Elector. George, you are troublesome.
A kiss ! To-night's a carnival of kisses,
And some one sure's kissing your Schulenburg
While you neglect her for the ungrateful business
Of spying on your wife.

Prince. Do I understand
Your Highness winks at infidelities—— ?

Princess. No, but he smiles to hear your lame inventions.
Grandfather, I have been in Ernest's company
Since we rose from table.

Elector. Yes, yes, daughterling.

Prince. Madam, whose glove is this ? A glove from
Flanders !

I gave it you and you carelessly flung it
At the feet of your innamorato.

Princess. This ?
I left it in the orangery. Ernest,
Did I not leave my gloves and domino
In the orangery ?

Prince Ernest. You did. A score of witnesses
Can vouch that we were there.

Mesbach. I saw their Highnesses
In the orangery. I also saw them leave it
Half an hour since.

Prince. Ay, there 'tis ! Half an hour
You'll not account for !

Prince Ernest. Every moment of it.
We were at the great fountain to see the fireworks.

Prince. In the dark—unrecognised, of course.

Prince Ernest. I know not,
Nor care, by God. You have my word for it, brother,
And shall accept the same.

Prince. How if I will not,
Jackanapes ? Do you touch your sword ?

Elector. Peace, princes !
Sophie, when gentlemen begin to jar,
Ladies had best begone. Leave us, my daughter,
And leave in peace. Ernest defends your cause
And I am judge.

Princess. I obey, honoured Elector.

[*She goes away.* SCHULENBURG *draws near.*

Prince Ernest. I say we were by the fountain——

Prince. You say and cannot prove. Who was at the
fountain
Beside yourself ?

Schulenburg. I was, for one, my Prince.
I waited for you there.

Prince. *Peste !* I had forgotten.

Elector. Fair nymph, had you no other occupation
But waiting for a lag o' love ?

Schulenburg. Yes, Highness.
I was eating caramels.

Elector. What ! All the while ?

Schulenburg. No, for I ate them all—[*To the PRINCE*—my
silver box,

You gave me—full, and still you never came.
Prince Ernest came and helped me eat your caramels,
Did you not, Sir? [*To PRINCE ERNEST.*]

Prince. Then the Princess of Hanover
Was not in his company.

Schulenburg. Yes, but she was,
She was close behind. But for all that Prince Ernest
Chatted with me.

Elector. George, here is a witness
Not to be traversed.

Prince. Nay, 'twas not for long,
Cannot have been for long——

Schulenburg. It was all the time
I waited—that was hours.

What! are you jealous?
'Tis too much wine makes you so quarrelsome,
Besides forgetful.

Elector. Well, this matter's settled!
I pronounce judgement. The Princess of Hanover
Is proved not guilty. George, thou swinish fellow,
Thou shalt make ample apology to this lady
And to the Princess. Nay, thou owest excuse
To me for spoiling such an evening. Lord!
We were growing young again, were we not, Clara?
Here come the dancers. Tune up! Join them, all!

[*Dancers rush in, with music. The ELECTOR offers his
hand to MADAME PLATEN, PRINCE ERNEST to ERMIN-
GARDA VON SCHULENBURG, and all join the dance
except the ELECTORAL PRINCE.*]

The dancers [Singing]

Viol and flute
No more be mute,
Come dancing, dancing, dancing!
Fa la la!
Mark the measure,
Here is pleasure,

A fig for love, a flier for wine !
 Cupid's bow and Bacchus' vine !
 I'd give them both for dancing ?

Fa la la !

Topers you
 Join not our crew,
 Who trip and fleet
 On nimble feet
 And wings of music dancing.

Fa la la !

All dance off, leaving the ELECTORAL PRINCE alone.

SCENE III.

[*Night. The PRINCESS OF HANOVER'S apartment. The ELECTRESS standing wrapped in a hood and cloak, the PRINCESS still in the same dress as in the preceding scene, her domino and mask thrown off on a chair. LEONORA VON KNESEBECK in the background.*]

Princess. Your justice, Madam ! The Prince of Hanover
 Unpardonably insults—more, he conspires
 With hireling knaves to ruin and defame,
 To blacken me, his wife——

Electress. Pshaw ! You are fanciful.
 George is a boor, dull, destitute of feeling,
 But for your conspiracy ! I say 'tis folly,
 And so does the Elector.

Princess. Ay, even the Elector.

Electress. Mere childish invention !

Princess. Is it an invention
 That the Prince insulted me grossly, and you,
 You and the Elector, Madam, are content
 When he refuses all apology ?

Electress. Content ! Am I a fool to be content
 With the Prince of Hanover ?

But here's a scandal
Engendered by your indiscretion.

Princess. Mine ?

Electress. Assuredly. What caused this amorous lady,
One of the Swede's so easy conquests, choose
Your domino for disguise ?

Princess. What have I done ?

Electress. Nothing almost ; and yet a world too much
For one that wears your name. A month ago
In the palace garden, walking with your daughter,
You took her in your arms—with a score of women
To wait upon the Princess, you must carry her !

Princess. A mortal sin !

Electress. No, merely ridiculous.

The scandal follows. Königsmarck was observed
To approach your Highness with an obsequious haste,
And take the child ; carry her princely Highness,
Walking beside you, up the steps of the palace.

Princess. Thus did Count Königsmarck ? O horrible !

Electress. Do you laugh, unstaid girl ? Do dignity
And the religious forms which rampart round
The power of Princes, move you but to laughter ?
Let fear control you, then. You have enemies ;
Your husband's one. Suppose you have done nothing,
That's not enough : you should say, smile, look nothing
Which hate or love might construe to a meaning
Beyond your thought.

Princess. So must you re-create me.

I am not such a thing, cold, calculating,
A mere machine of State ; I am alive,
Young, and a woman.

Elector. There are many women

In the world : you are the Princess of Hanover.

Princess. Who dared to make me so ? My enemies.

I was a child then—now I'd kill myself
Before I'd be your Princess.

Electress.

Sophie of Zell,

Remember who you were, raised to what height
 From dubious birth and obscure ancestry,
 Made equal to what lineage, made the mother
 Of Princes, even of monarchs—you to spurn
 The illustrious House of Hanover !

Thou bastard !

Princess. 'Tis a false name ! My mother is more
 honourable,

More dear to me than all the crowns of the earth
 And all their pompous wearers.

Electress.

The stroke of midnight !

And like a fool I rob my bed to wrangle

With a high-tempered chit.

Madam, good night—

And may your good night bring consideration

And due respect.

[*The ELECTRESS goes out.*]

Princess. Consideration ! Thou dardest enjoin me
 Consider ! I will consider thee, thou enemy
 Of my mother's honour, fraudulent bargainer
 And robber of my life, my mortal only
 Inestimable life, for what mean price
 Bought, for what mockery sold !

Away, Electress !

Chide at your daughter of Prussia, bid her exercise
 Discretion, count her lovers if you can
 And mulct her if you may.

And thou, Discretion.

Thou slant-eyed sister of young Virtue, never
 Twinned in your birth, come, I will entertain thee
 To-morrow. But to-night, Madam and Highness,
 Shall be a holiday. You have sent packing—
 I thank you for't—the sharp unslaked Virtue
 Whose fangs were in my heart, making me sacrifice
 My sweet sole friend, put out irrevocably

The one light of dim life and quite abandon
My hope of human joy.

Extreme honour,

Indulgence and mild courtesy were nothing
To compensate that loss, but calumny,
Insult and scorn—! I thank you, House of Hanover !
My debt is paid, I am free.

Leonora.

Weeping, dear lady,

Will balm our misery better than laughter.

Princess. Misery ? I am mad with all the joy
Of all my years, my youth-consuming years'

Hoarded, unspent delight.

Say, Leonora,

Where are my wings ? Do they not shoot up radiant,
A splendour of snowy vans, swimming the air
Just ere the rush of rapture ?

[Without, returning revellers are passing by with music
and laughter.

Hark ! They know

And clamour out our joy. Look up, my Philip,
And see thy young star shine !

The lamp, Leonora !

Leonora.

Highness ! Honoured lady !

Consider—wait awhile.

Princess.

O, I have waited

More years than now shall fiery moments fleet

Ere I embrace my joy !

[She seizes a lamp, and approaches the window. LEONORA
endeavours to restrain her.

How ? Wouldst thou venture ?

Nay, girl, but I am mistress.

Leonora.

Madam, to-night

He is at Herrenhausen——

Princess.

Or at Monplaisir ?

No, he is there. A fire runs from his presence

And leaps into my blood, I need no question

Of eye or ear.

[She draws back the curtain, and places the lamp in the window.]

Do now as I command thee.

Haste to the postern door, for though thou speed
He will outrun thee. Bring Count Königsmarck.

[LEONORA goes out.]

Now shall the long, mad hunger of my heart
Be satisfied, now do I dare to look
On the face of Life before I look on Death.
And I wait for him here. Can it be I,
The poor sad prisoned girl, the soul shut out
For ever and ever from her heritage
Of love and happiness? Who could have guessed
That I should be so happy, I should love
And be beloved again?

[Presently KÖNIGSMARCK comes in alone. He pauses as though in doubt for what reason he has been summoned. The PRINCESS flies to meet him.]

My Königsmarck!

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A bosquet in the garden of the Castle at Zell. A fountain with a statue of a faun. Moonlight. KÖNIGSMARCK is heard coming along an alley towards the bosquet, playing and singing. He comes in singing.

Cover, O eve, the world with mist
Till we two shall have kist and kist!

Linger, O moon, in the western skies,
Till we have looked in each other's eyes!

Whisper, O wind ! We shall not speak,
Heart upon heart and cheek to cheek.

Drown, wild dawn, the stars in fire !
We shall have had our heart's desire !

[*The PRINCESS hurries into the bosquet.*]

Princess. Philip !

Königsmarck. It is thou !

Princess. Love !

Königsmarck. Is it possible ?

Do I indeed hold thee, my heart's treasure !

Princess. How ? Dare another storm thee so with kisses ?

Königsmarck. Ah, my sweet Princess !

Princess. Now if delight could kill, should I be dead.

Königsmarck. Love, wilt thou swoon ?

Princess. But I am strong, like a young lioness
Leaping upon her prey. Dost thou not fear me ?

So, when I hold thee fast, my prisoner ?

Königsmarck. Faster, beloved !

Princess. Now will I press the soul out of thy mouth !

How little dost thou love me ?

Königsmarck. Léonisse !

Princess. Answer me not, for nothing will avail
To alter it. I am thine irrecoverably.

Königsmarck. Loose me a moment for my hungry eyes
Would have thy beauty.

Dear, art thou so pale,
Or does the envious moon dissemble thee,
Laying her lilies o'er the bravery

Of my carnations ?

Princess. Pale ? Ah God, my Philip !

Did I not tell thee I was worn with misery,
Ugly, and old, and wasted !

Königsmarck. Léonisse !

Princess. I am mad to love thee !
And madly do I love thee, my prince of the world.

When other eyes admire and tongues discourse
 Thy beauty, praise a magic thou dost wear
 Beyond discourse, or tell how thou art high
 In the esteem of captains and of kings,
 As of enchanted women—then my pride
 Runs to illume these windows for my love,
 And in triumphant scarlet dress my cheeks
 For the unforgotten kisses. But, O me!
 When I reflect in the long, lonely nights
 How much thou art adored, how fairer women
 Woo thee, and I absent, and I unworthy,
 Then must I weep
 And waste my little beauty, and with moan
 And various torment, and incessant fear,
 Post on to ugly age.

Königsmarck. Though all were truth
 Which is, Heaven pardon thee, a wanton lie—
 Yet do I love thee. Were this delicate sheath
 Wrinkled, and all the mansion of my heart
 Robbed of its exquisite ornaments—I love thee.
 By what shall I swear? By this remembered haunt,
 These verdured walls of ours, and branched roof,
 By each long alley, by the immortal Loves,
 The naiads and lithe fauns who listen for them
 Quietly through the years. I do conjure
 These whom no transitory seasons touch,
 To charm away Time, which is here illusion,
 Bidding old suns to warm, old scents revive
 And the old summer sounds—and two who are lovers
 Now and apart, unhappy, hand in hand
 Run joyously, children.

Léonisse,
 Child-love and lady-love, star of my youth,
 And deep and perilous passion of my prime,
 My ruin and despair, my soul's salvation,
 The angel of my heart, how could another,

A mere beautiful woman be to me

As thou, beloved ?

Princess. Philip, she must be nothing !

I claim thee mine, my own to the least shred,

Mine by the memory of passionate hours

These arms have been thy prison, mine, mine only

By sad uncounted vigils, the forlorn bed

Where some few letters whisper to me of love

Awhile and speak no more. My thronging kisses

Beat on them and my tears raining implore,

But they will speak no further.

Königsmarck. Answer her,

Dumb letters, tell her how her lover lies,

His midnight lamp hovering upon a face

Fair to enamour anchorites, and tell

How he in love is eloquent and crowds

A million kisses on a lady's lips

That smiling suffer them—but are more silent

Than my dumb letters. Child !—I mean your portrait.

Princess. Philip !

Königsmarck. Or I sleep and you wander through my
dreams

Till I could curse the world-awakening dawn

That fleets away my joy.

Princess. You dream we are happy ?

Königsmarck. Often—and yet—I have another dream.

Let me not think on't !

Princess. Ah, it is unhappy !

Königsmarck. Horrible. Yet I know not what it is.

Princess. It is a dream, a thing less than a shadow,

The child of memory fathered by a fancy,

'Tis born and dies in a moment. I will face it

Boldlier than thou, my soldier, will outface it .

When I have seen its face.

Königsmarck. The face of Platen.

Princess. Then is it ugly.

Königsmarck. I would laugh at it
 Could I but grasp the vision. When I wake
 The sweat hangs on my hair and some half knowledge,
 Mortal, and of unspeakable calamity
 Freezes my blood, yet all's lost and forgotten,
 Save where there drifts dim down the gulf of sleep,
 That one sinister face.

Then like a woman
 I weep and pray like one, battering the gates
 Of inaccessible God, bidding Him smite
 Where else He will, but spare, pardon, protect
 Thee, thou adored child.

How much unhappiness
 I have wrought thee, Léonisse !
 'Tis I with my inexorable love
 Have made thy life wretched and perilous
 Which else might have been happy.

Princess. Happy, Philip ?
 Out of a sepulchre of souls still-born,
 Didst thou deliver me, and I will thank thee
 Always and even for the memory
 Of what has been ; for not in circumstance
 Is love's evil or good, but in itself
 And its own absoluteness.

Königsmarck. Dare you abandon
 A hoped crown to wear the name of Königsmarck ?

Princess. An empire.

Königsmarck. God ! that it were possible.
 But now are we both alike ruined and robbed.

Princess. Patience, beloved ! My intolerable wrongs
 Have won upon my mother——

[LEONORA comes in hastily.]

Leonora. Madam, I beseech you
 Come to your apartments. Once already the Prince——

Königsmarck. What Prince ?

Princess. It is Max.

Leonora. Has hammered at your door,
Very importunate. The Duke your father,
Your mother and the rest have risen from play
And certainly will now visit your Highness.
These will take no denial.

Princess. Dear, I fly !

Königsmarck. Love, not so suddenly !

Princess. Follow me in a while
To the postern gate. If it be possible
When all our nightly ceremonious courtesies
Are done, Leonora shall descend and open—
Nay, but you know the private stair. Your patience
Needs exercise, Sir, and may chance to get it.

[*The PRINCESS and LEONORA hasten away. KÖNIGSMARCK paces the bosquet until he hears footsteps and voices approaching, when he conceals himself. The DUCHESS OF ZELL and PRINCE MAX come in.*

Prince Max. I heard it from the window, Madam, distinctly.

Duchess. A page practising the lute.

Prince Max. Then as I told you
This morning early as I went a-shooting—
I'll be shot myself if 'twas not Königsmarck
Rode into the town, his face muffled in his cloak,
And Hildebrand behind him.

Duchess. Dame, good nephew,
If you are not Sophie's friend you surely should be,
Since 'tis her championship of you young princes
And your infringed rights has injured her
So greatly with the Elector.

Prince Max. Partly, Madam.
Do not mistrust my dear and brotherly friendship
For the Princess. Oh, I know how perilously
She stands and from her pride and indiscretion
I would protect her. The adventurer Königsmarck
Will be her ruin.

Duchess. I abhor the fellow,
Do from my soul regret Sophie's perversity
And anger find in him an instrument
To plague her husband with ; yet I half pardon it.
His Electoral Highness all but strangled her
And beat her blue last month.

Prince Max. George is a villain,
And so is Königsmarck.

Duchess. A swaggering ape !
Sophie is most imprudent, yet she is virtuous,
That I will swear. True, she's a born coquette,
But cold as January and ever mocking
At love and at young gentlemen. What's Königsmarck
To change her disposition ? I have heard her
Speak very slightly of Königsmarck
When other women praised him.

Prince Max. Oh, undoubtedly !
It is not love but wrong and indignation
Throw her in the arms of Königsmarck.

Duchess. Never ! She would as soon embrace a
scorpion.

Prince Max. I am sure of it. I mean make her imperil
So much for him. He labours to entangle her
Merely to boast a conquest. Were't achieved,
He were gone already, vaunting it through Europe.

Duchess. Well, well ! There's no one here.

Prince Max. Perhaps there has been.

Duchess. You are more suspicious than a husband.

Prince Max. Jealous
Of the honour of our House—and Sophie's happiness.

Duchess. 'Tis a chilly night for lovers. Let's within.

Prince Max. Willingly, madam.

Duchess. I warrant we find my daughter
In bed by now, waiting our nightly visit.

[*They leave the bosquet.* KÖNIGSMARCK emerges from
his concealment.]

Königsmarck. My thanks, your Highnesses. Hurry!

Despatch!

Linger not, lest a lover's maledictions

Turn your sound sleep to nightmare.

Nay, sleep sound,

Madame d'Olbreuse and honourable brother

Of our Electoral George, would-be consoler

Of his fair wife, you that do wish her happiness,

Sleep sound! Let the bright world be blotted out

Under the dim and gradual tide of sleep;

Only the pacing moon be vigilant,

Far on the crystal confines of the air,

And one white lady,

Moon of my joyous heart, awake for love,

Awake for infinite happiness, awake

In arms that holding her hold Heaven.

Good-night!

Good-night! Fair dreams attend your Highnesses.

[He leaves the bosquet.]

SCENE II.

An ante-chamber in the Electoral Palace at Hanover. The lights are extinguished except for one which a lacquey carries in his hand. He is in attendance on MADAME PLATEN, who wears a hood and cloak.

Madame Platen. I say I will see the Elector.

Impudent rogue!

Dare'st thou refuse me?

Lacquey.

Madam, your ladyship,

The Elector is asleep.

Madame Platen.

Then must he waken.

Wake him I say, rascal!

Lacquey.

Your ladyship

Will tell him 'twas her doing?

Madame Platen.

Fellow, knock!

[*The LACQUEY knocks timidly at a door. There is no reply. MADAME PLATEN pushes him aside and knocks loudly. A voice answers angrily and indistinctly from within.*

Madame Platen. Clara von Platen. Let me in immediately.

[*Again an indistinct voice from within.*

I shall not go. I have matters of importance
Which will not wait till morning. Open, Highness!

[*To the lacquey.*

Light me the sconces yonder. So! Be off!
I must have private conference with his Highness.

[*The LACQUEY obeys her and goes out. MADAME PLATEN waits impatiently until the inner door opens and the ELECTOR emerges in a dressing-gown, with a silk handkerchief tied round his head.*

Elector. The devil, Madam! What possesses you
To invade my apartments at this hour? *Potztausend!*
I hate such indecorum. At my age
I'll not be made a laughing-stock and scandal——

Madame Platen. You are a laughing-stock, Sir, and a scandal

To all the world. The honour of your House
Is openly dragged in the dirt—but you say nothing,
You will do nothing.

Elector. To your business, Clara.

I am weary of such talk.

Madame Platen. Here is my business.

Königsmarck left his house half an hour since——

Elector. Königsmarck! The old story.

Madame Platen. Königsmarck

Is now in the apartment of the Princess. Haste!

Yourself be judge and witness——

Elector.

May the devil

Devour all women! Madam, am I blind

Or, deaf, to be unaware yourself had hankerings
After this jackanapes? The Princess of Hanover
Has been perverse, thankless, undutiful,
We have our quarrel; but I'll not insult her,
Invade her chamber on the authority
Of a jealous woman——

Madame Platen. A trusty gentleman
Saw him, I say, enter——

Elector. Even that is possible——
Yet I refuse. For Königsmarck and she
Being of an old acquaintance, may desire
Most honourably to bid a long farewell
In privacy, unirked by scandalous tongues
And prying eyes. Do you not know the fellow
Is made a Marshal by the King of Saxony?
To-morrow he resigns, he leaves our service
And Hanover for ever. Understand me.
I want no scandal, Clara, and to-morrow
Quietly we close the page of Königsmarck.

Madame Platen. Do you imagine these lovers then
to-night
Bidding a long farewell, bathed in their tears?
Bidding farewell! Oh innocent Elector!

Learn now the truth.
Locked in each other's arms, with insolent joy,
With scorn and mockery they plan defiance,
A sounding insult, an unheard-of outrage
On the crown of Hanover, the dignity
And honour of your House. Look at this letter——
I have more here, I speak not without book.
The Princess of Hanover means to escape.
To-morrow she will fly, all is prepared.
Whither will fly? To the Duke of Wolfenbüttel!
The man that but for you had been her husband,
Your Highness' enemy, the enemy
Of Hanover—the Duke of Wolfenbüttel!

Elector. The Princess fly ? Bah ! that's impossible.
She has not a gulden in her purse——

Madame Platen. She will have.
The sly d'Olbreuse, the scheming Frenchwoman,
Has conjured a new fortune, God knows whence,
And means to endow her daughter. Königsmarck
Not vainly revels with his King of Saxony.
Marshal he is, master of lands he will be,
And means under the nose of Hanover
To have and hold your Princess.

Elector. Give me the letters,
I'll see these letters.

[*Reads papers handed to him by MADAME PLATEN*
Damned audacious scoundrel !

And Sophie too ! Traitors ! To Wolfenbüttel !
She dares write to the Duke ? Ungrateful drab !
So we are dirt, we of the House of Hanover,
Compared to Königsmarck ! Ho, ho ! we flatter,
Cajole friend Wolfenbüttel, count the hours
Till we can snap our fingers at Electors,
Safe with our Kings and Dukes. To Wolfenbüttel ?
To hell with you !—Reach me some paper, Clara,
Ink, sealing-wax.

Königsmarck is in her chamber
To-night, you say ?

Madame Platen. He was. You must strike quickly
If you would not miss your blow.

Elector. [*Writing and handing her a sealed paper.*]

You will take these orders
To the Captain of the Guard-room. Trusty soldiers,
Four of them, halberdiers, will accompany you,
Under your orders, to the Leine Palais—
No, Clara, not to the apartment of the Princess,
To the Hall of Knights. If Königsmarck be yonder,
He must needs pass out along the corridor
To the private stair, by the door that's opposite

The door of the great Hall. Well then, secure him.
Quietly—no bloodshed ! Nay, the villain's handsome,
You will deal tenderly with him. For the Princess,
With her you shall not deal. I will follow you
When I am ready. Secure your prisoner,
And wait until I come to you.

Madame Platen. Your Highness
Shall be instantly obeyed. [She goes out.

Elector. To Wolfenbüttel !
Heartless, ungrateful girl ! Sophie, I renounce thee.

SCENE III.

*The Hall of Knights in the Leine Palais, dimly lighted by a lamp.
A door is open, leading into a corridor, and showing another
door opposite. Four halberdiers stand in the hall. MADAME
PLATEN is in the corridor, engaged in cautiously turning and
removing the key of the opposite door. She then comes into
the Hall and addresses the halberdiers.*

Madame Platen. Here, under the great chimney-piece, in
the shadow,
Await my signal. The man who makes your business
Will come stealthily along the corridor,
He will try that door, wondering to find it locked,
Which he left open—then, I raise my hand.

First Halberdier. Your ladyship would have us strike him
down,
Or take him prisoner, using him with respect ?
We are soldiers, Madam, we know how to obey,
But we want our orders.

Madame Platen. Have I not told you, fellow ?
You must take him prisoner. If he should resist—
And being a gentleman and fully armed,
Surely he comes well-armed, he will resist—
Why, use your weapons, men, strike to some purpose,

What's primary is he does not escape.
Secure the man, unhurt, but should he struggle
Be not too scrupulous, strike as you may.

First Halberdier. We'll carry out your ladyship's commands,
If we have understood them.

Madame Platen. Now stand back.

[*The HALBERDIERS hide themselves under the great chimney-piece, in the shadow of the carved knights. MADAME PLATEN goes to the door and peers cautiously down the corridor.*]

Madame Platen. [*Muttering to herself.*] And still he does not come.

A long love-tryst, ay, and a long farewell.

Adventurous fool!

How dares he linger? Nay, her arms are about him
And will not let him go—yet some few kisses!

[*She paces the Hall once or twice, then returns to her post of observation. Two o'clock tolls from the bells of the town without.*]

It is two o'clock. Listen! No, I hear nothing,
Nothing except the wind shaking the doors.
The nights are short, and soon the stealthy dawn
Creeps in. Dost thou forget to count the hours,
The swift short hours? Are they so sweet, Königsmarck?
Hurry those long kisses, for I, I too
Would keep a tryst with thee.

[*She approaches the chimney-piece under which the HALBERDIERS are lurking, and speaks to them.*]

Should he resist,

Fear nothing but to miss your capture—kill him.

[*She returns to the open door and again peers cautiously down the corridor, listening. At length a door is heard opening and closing in the distance. She moves stealthily back into the Hall and speaks to the Soldiers.*]

The man is coming. You have your orders. Kill him.

First Halberdier. We shall obey your ladyship's orders.

[KÖNIGSMARCK is heard walking carelessly along the corridor. In a minute he is visible through the doorway carrying a light, dressed in a riding-suit and armed only with a very small sword. Finding the door opposite that leading into the Hall locked, he places his light on the ground and kneels to examine the lock.

Madame Platen. [To the Soldiers.] Kill him.

[The HALBERDIERS rush upon KÖNIGSMARCK, who leaps to his feet.

First Halberdier. Yield yourself prisoner.

[KÖNIGSMARCK draws his sword and endeavours to defend himself. He is struck down by the HALBERDIERS.

Madame Platen. Hold! O, Jesus, Jesus!

Königsmarck. Cursed assassins!

Madame Platen. God! You have murdered him.

See, see! He bleeds!

First Halberdier. Yes, we have killed the man,
According to your ladyship's orders.

Madame Platen. Is he dead?

First Halberdier. No, but he will be presently.

Madame Platen. Bring him in.

[The HALBERDIERS lift up KÖNIGSMARCK and bring him into the Hall.

Lay him here on the ground.

Now Heaven be thanked, he breathes!

'Tis a small wound——

Königsmarck. Killed like a rat in a trap!

My God, the Princess——!

Madame Platen. She brought you to this.

Why were you false to me? Philip, my Philip,

I hate thee not, wilt thou not look on me?

'Twas but a moment's anger—it is the Princess

Has been thy ruin. Philip! O look up!

Merciful God, he is dying! Courage, love,

'Tis but a little wound, it cannot kill thee;

No, I'll not let thee die.

Fetch a physician !

Run for some help !

First Halberdier. Lady, the man's past help.
We have done his business.

[KÖNIGSMARCK opens his eyes, raises himself somewhat,
and without observing MADAME PLATEN, addresses the
HALBERDIERS.

Königsmarck. Men, I charge you solemnly,
You that have murdered me, do no worse murder,
Kill not my testimony, but bear witness,
I, Philip of Königsmarck, here dying,
Declare the Princess innocent. The Princess
Of Hanover, I say, is innocent.
Remember—she is innocent.

Madame Platen. The Princess !
She who has brought thee to this bloody end,
Lured thee, fond wretch——

Königsmarck. Platen ! Is it thou ? She-devil !
O my poor lady,
Left to this monster's mercy ! My dying curse,
Platen, my dying curse——

Madame Platen. I will not hear it !

[She stops her ears and stamps upon KÖNIGSMARCK's
mouth. He drops back with a groan.

First Halberdier. She-devil, said he !

Other Halberdiers. Now, God pardon us !
A devil's dam !

Madame Platen. Fellows, I slipped in his blood—
And trod by accident—God how he groans !
Merciful God, he groans—— !

First Halberdier. Rattles in his throat.

Second Halberdier. He is all but dead.

Third Halberdier. Would he were buried.

Madame Platen. Dead ?

Philip, I never meant it—No, not dead !

How couldst thou dream I hated thee ? I loved thee,
 I love thee to despair, to madness, Philip,
 Look up, adored, beloved, speak, pardon me—
 Nay, torture if thou wilt, reproach, revile,
 Swear that thou lovest her, only come back—
 Not dead—dead—dead !

Enter the ELECTOR in his usual dress.

Elector. Eh ! What's all this ?
 What's wrong with him ?
First Halberdier. He is dead—if that be wrong.
Elector. Hell and damnation ! Dead ! You blundering
 fools,
 I said, secure the man.
First Halberdier. We had our orders
 And have obeyed them. Let your Highness ask the lady.
Elector. Come, Madam, come ! Stand up and stop
 your snivelling,
 Though you may well be grieved. A sorry business !
Madame Platen. I never meant—Dear God, how could
 I mean
 To kill him ? Hear me swear——
Elector. You knew my wishes ;
 To avoid scandal, noise and violence,
 And you murder me a man here on the threshold
 Of the Princess's apartment. Man, say I !
 Kill me a Marshal of Saxony.
 God be with us !
 Here is a foul deed and a foolish.
Madame Platen. Sir,
 Pardon me, do not reprimand these men,
 These honest men, whose zeal has made their error.
 They would have seized him, but he fought ; your High-
 ness
 Knows him not easily overmatched, a fighter

Fierce and impetuous—thus it chanced in the struggle,
It happened he was hurt, mortally hurt.

An evil chance ! Oh, I call Christ to witness,
If but these heavy tears were my heart's blood,—

Elector. Yes, you are bitter sorry ; but whether you
meant it,

And why you should have meant it—that God knows,
And you perhaps. For Königsmarck himself

I am not so much concerned. He had outrun
A long lease of indulgence, and cold steel

Was all in his trade.

Ay, thou fine piece of flesh,

What wouldst thou with this woman's ware of beauty ?

Thou had' else been a good soldier.

'Twas ill done

For him, for me whom all my enemies

And his too powerful friends will hold accountable

For your so bloody deed.

[*To the HALBERDIERS.*] Listen, you men !

All you have done and seen and what you shall do

This night is silence. There's no penalty

So hard, not even death, but I'll inflict it

On the man who breathes a syllable. For the rest

A well-lined purse is better satisfaction

To men than gabble.

'Tis an awkward business,

This of the corpse. Folks will be stirring shortly

Outside the palace. *Diantre !* I think I have it.

There's a disused stairway, a blind entrance

Near this, under an arras. There we'll hide it

Till further counsel.

First Halberdier.

May it please your Highness,

The weather's hot. Some noses would scent blood

Long before noon to-morrow. There be masons

Working about the palace and their stuff

Stands just without. This fellow and myself

Have been of the trade ; I warrant in an hour
We build yon carrion up past all discovery,
If so it please your Highness.

Elector. What ? You can ?
Fellow, thou bear'st a brain. Take up the body
And follow me. Some of you before morning
Must wash this blood away. Though it be little,
It will tell tales.

[The HALBERDIERS take up the corpse of KÖNIGSMARCK
and follow the ELECTOR out of the Hall.]

Madame Platen. This corpse they carry
Is Königsmarck ; I have looked my last upon him
For ever and a day. Soon wilt thou know it,
Soon wilt thou suffer, Clara : not to-night.
This blood is the heart's blood of Königsmarck,
And I have willed it so. Nay, that's extravagant
Beyond the edge of nightmare, laughable
For the madness of it. I kill Königsmarck ?
Yet will I shift the light, I'll see it no more
For fear of recollections.

[Looking down the corridor.]

Princess of Hanover,
'Tis thou hast murdered him, not I, 'tis thou !
Hast damned my soul to everlasting torment,
Thou and thy mad kisses.
Shall I suffer alone ?

I have made all smooth for thee, thou'lt weep awhile
And then walk virtuously and wear a crown ;
But I shall suffer. No ! There shall be some woe,
Some punishment, vengeance shall overtake thee !

[The ELECTOR returns.]

Elector. A dark, ill-omened room !

Come with me, Madam,
Seek your apartment, we must make pretence
To sleep. Pray God this matter go no further !

Madame Platen. What of—the corpse ?

Elector. There we are fortunate.
Tools are to hand, bricks, mortar, handy fellows,
And the blind stairway. If there be none wakeful
To note the noise they make building him in,
By morning that your bloody handiwork
Will lie concealed for ever.

Madame Platen. Thus? No burial?
Some will surmise——

Elector. The Princess,—yet she dare not.

Madame Platen. What of the Princess?

Elector. Let her enemies
Deal with the Princess. I'll not stand her friend.
A curse on her and you! A curse on women!
There's Death and Silence yonder, say Amen.
God! what a tumbled heap of grinning death
Stares at them yet awhile! An hour ago
This was a man, and full of insolent life,
Amorous and brave, courted, a friend of kings;
Now like a dead rat mouldering in a wainscote,
He's left till Judgement Day.

Madame Platen. Till Judgement Day.

[*They go out. The lamp flickers and dies down.*]

SCENE IV.

The same. The Hall is in darkness. The PRINCESS comes in carrying a candle, and followed by LEONORA, who is laden with papers. As they talk the grey light of dawn begins to steal into the Hall.

Leonora. See, there is wood on the hearth, good dry wood
Ready for kindling.

[*She kindles the fire.*]

If your Highness will sit here
And choose out what's to burn, we'll make a bonfire

To celebrate the end of your captivity,
Though it be some hours too soon.

Princess.

No, not a moment.

Already I am air. They might as easily
Hold a white mist-wreath which the mounting sun
Spirits away up the unceiled blue !

*[She seats herself, and while they talk she sorts out papers
which LEONORA burns.]*

Leonora.

I am glad your Highness

Is of so good a courage. Yesterday
You were otherwise.

Princess.

Yesterday, Leonora,

Was a blank day, mere blank. I had not seen him,
Seen how fair Fortune and high courage sit
Throned on his face.

Leonora.

This time to-morrow morning

We should be jogging through the dark to Wolfenbüttel,
I would all were well over.

Princess.

So it will be

This time to-morrow morning.

Leonora.

I pray God !

Hush ! Do you hear that noise ?

Princess.

Poor Leonora !

You are grown so fearful that a rat in the wall
Can make you shudder. Faithful and dear friend,
One day you shall be recompensed for all,
Meantime be not afraid. In this adventure
Is not more peril than we have encountered
Often enough before.

There's not a point

Is unprepared for us in all the journey,
And you know well how easily we two
May slip away unnoticed.

Leonora.

Forgive me, Madam.

I am overwrought. Listen ! Those sounds again.
I marvel what they mean.

Princess. Builders at work.

Leonora. At dead of night ?

Princess. The night is almost over,
 Soon will the topmost towers discern the day.
 The day ! The day ! O last of all the days
 I have spent in extreme penury of joy,
 In garish misery, unhelped wrong,
 And in unpardonable dishonour. God,
 Who never granted me so much of happiness
 As Thy least bird in May, grant to our love
 This final brave escape ! Let us cut loose,
 Loose from the tangling years, the coil of circumstance,
 And stand free before Thee, free to each other.
 Grant it and we have sworn by no transgression
 Again to offend, to serve Thee all our lives—
 Only grant us to-morrow !

[*A slight crash without, as of a brick falling.*

Leonora. Hush ! What was that ?

Princess. 'Twas here he held me first upon his heart,
 With little kisses lighter than a child's,
 He kissed me here, who with far other kisses
 Has bound me since to him ; and sweet was love
 But ah, how new ! And yet more strange than sweet.
 What did I know of happiness,
 As now I know it, of long, intimate love ?

Leonora !

Shall I say that also in the time to come,
 When this to-morrow is the yesterday
 Of our new life, when we, husband and wife,
 Under what stars I know not nor consider,
 Spend our unprisoned days ?
 Shall I not wonder how these two poor lovers
 Imagined themselves to have known happiness ?
 But we shall know it,
 Calm, perfect happiness.

Up lingering dawn !

Why dost thou creep so pale, like one afraid ?
I want the sun ! I want to-morrow !

Leonora. Madam,
There was a hand on the door. What can these builders
Be doing here at this hour ?

Princess. Why, they're building.
What does it matter ? Let them build all night,
I warrant they'll not build a wall so high
Love cannot overleap it.

Leonora. May Heaven prosper us !
Let us to bed and sleep and never dream.

[*They prepare to leave the Hall.*]
Princess. Leonora, bring the light. Do you see ? A
stain
Here on the floor, here on my dress, dark red.

Leonora. What can it mean ?

Princess. O God ! What can it be ?
Answer me, girl !

Leonora. Blood, Madam.

Princess. Blood !—Whose blood ?

NOTES

P. 7, THE BUILDERS : a Nocturne in Westminster Abbey.

In 1902 a large body of Colonial troops, who had fought in the South African War, were in England for the Coronation of Edward VII. On August 17 a service was held for them, at their special request, in Westminster Abbey.

The great men buried in the Abbey, who are alluded to without being named, are :

I. l. 23. Dean Stanley.

IV. l. 24. Admiral Sir Cloudesley Shovel, whose ship was wrecked off the Scilly Islands. Tradition says that when his body was washed ashore, life was not extinct, but the spark was extinguished by a woman, for the sake of an emerald ring he was wearing.

V. l. 12. Robert Browning.

VIII. l. 18. Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

Dundonald (IV. l. 37). "Earl Dundonald's banner was, after the charges of fraud brought against him in 1814, taken from its place and ignominiously kicked down the steps of [Henry VII.'s] Chapel. . . . In 1860 . . . by order of [Queen Victoria] it was restored by the Herald of the Order to its ancient support." Stanley's *Memorials of Westminster Abbey*. In 1913 the banners of the former Knights of the Bath were removed from Henry VII.'s Chapel, and those of the actual Knights substituted.

P. 73, OXFORD BELLS.

P. 77, verses 3 and 4. See Hogg's *Reminiscences of Shelley at University College*. Old President Routh of Magdalen College (d. 1854, in his hundredth year) would relate how he had seen Dr. Johnson coming down the steps of University, where he had been calling on the Master.

Verses 5 and 6. Henry V., as Prince, was a student for a short time at Queen's College. All Souls' was founded by

Chichele to expiate his sin in having urged Henry to his French wars. Chichele ordained that prayers should be said there for all souls of the faithful, and especially for the souls of Henry V. and those who had perished in his wars.

Verse 7. Addison was a demy of Magdalen. Gibbon was fifteen when he was sent to Magdalen.

P. 105, YOUNG WINDEBANK.

The circumstances of Young Windebank's death are historical ; but with regard to his character, some poetic license has been taken.

P. 196, WILD JUSTICE.

In explanation of the circumstances of this poem, it may be necessary to state that lighthouses could formerly be erected by private individuals, who were then empowered by Act of Parliament to raise dues on all ships passing them. That on the Skerries was in private hands so late as the year 1841.

I am indebted for the first lines of the opening ballad to the following two lines quoted in *Wuthering Heights* :—

*It was far in the night, and the bairnies grat,
The mither beneath the mools heard that.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks are due to:—

Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co. for permission to reprint
“Wild Justice.”

Messrs. Duckworth for permission to reprint “The Princess of Hanover” in an abbreviated version.

Mr. Elkin Matthews for permission to reprint part of the poem formerly entitled “Aëromancy,” which part is incorporated with new verses under the title of “Oxford Bells.” Also to reprint the other eight poems contained in the volume called “Aëromancy.”

The editor of the *Cornhill* for permission to reprint
“High Tide on the Victoria Embankment.”

The editor of the *English Review* for permission to reprint “The Dance of Vanity” and “The Changeling.”

The editor of the *Englishwoman* for permission to reprint “Under the Lamp.”

The editor of the *Windsor Magazine* for permission to reprint “The Lost Comrades,” “A Last Walk Together,” and “The Lost Lover.”

SOME OPINIONS ON THE POEMS OF MRS. MARGARET L. WOODS

*Part of a letter from MRS. HUMPHRY WARD, introducing
MRS. WOODS, as a lecturer, to American audiences.*

“In this great joint English-speaking and English-reading public of England and America, noisier reputations are apt to crowd the scene, and work so delicate yet strong, so scholarly and yet broad, so refined and yet original as that of Mrs. Woods’ may not always find its appropriate audience. In England, at any rate, there is no doubt among those who follow with any keenness the course of English letters as to Mrs. Woods’ place and fame. As a novel-writer, the author of ‘A Village Tragedy’ and ‘Esther Vanhomrigh’ stands easily in our front rank. . . . Here, we felt, was a study of Village Life worthy in point of tragic mastery and simplicity to rank with George Eliot’s similar work, and those who welcomed ‘A Village Tragedy’ have never wavered in their opinion of it, or of the noble study of the immortal Swift story, which followed it, in ‘Esther Vanhomrigh.’ But to many people Mrs. Woods is even better known as one of our best modern poets. Years ago in certain little books, issued from an Oxford Press, and now become the prize of bibliophiles, the first poems of ‘Margaret L. Woods’ appeared. Later years have seen several successive volumes of Mrs. Woods’ poems, including the passionate and beautiful play with its stately blank verse and its lovely lyrics—‘The Princess of Hanover.’ In the volumes of miscellaneous verse there are poems that ought never to be missing from the English anthologies of the future—‘To the Forgotten Dead’ or ‘A Ballad of Earth,’ or the striking and beautiful poem on the death of Mrs.

Woods' father, the Dean of Westminster, and the tolling of that Abbey bell, which carries abroad over vast London, from age to age, the last message of him who has been in life the guardian of London's historic shrine.

"There are qualities in Mrs. Woods' gifts—qualities of fire, romance and music—that ought specially, I think, to appeal to American audiences, and I trust that she will win from them the warm welcome she deserves."

MR. FREDERIC HARRISON, in the *Nineteenth Century*.

"I have found a new poet . . . whose sombre music haunts me as I wander round the remnants of the Minster Grange or watch the ploughman over the weary sweeps of the down. . . . There is a bit of eighteen lines 'To the Forgotten Dead,' full of a pathetic music and a stern patience, which might be the sequel to the noble lines of George Eliot, 'Oh might I join the Choir Invisible,' but they contain a thought not in the larger poem, a thought well worth our meditations. . . . There is to my ear a melodious wail in the refrain, 'To the Forgotten Dead,' 'To the Unhonoured Dead,' which reminds me of some of those strange sobs in unison written by Edward Fitzgerald. . . . One would have thought it impossible to say anything fresh, even endurable about night; but it is not every day that one has such a 'Ballade of the Night' as that which opens thus: [&c.] . . ."

MR. HERBERT A. L. FISHER, Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University, Fellow of the British Academy and Lecturer at the Lowell Institute, Boston, U.S.A., 1909: *Introducing Mrs. Woods as a lecturer in America*.

"Mrs. Margaret L. Woods . . . is one of the very small band of English writers of rare and incontestable genius. . . . Her lyrics are among the most beautiful of our time."

From *Academy and Literature*, Dec. 6, 1902.

"In accordance with our custom we sent last week to a number of well-known men and women, a request that they

would name the two books which, during the past year, they have read with most interest and pleasure."

MR. THOMAS HARDY : "Margaret L. Woods' 'Princess of Hanover,' "

(No other book was mentioned by Mr. Hardy.)

MR. MACKAIL, Professor of Poetry, Oxford, 1906-11, in *Lectures on Poetry*, 1911.

"Among all the rest there is a single poet and a single poem outstanding ; there were the creator and creation of a new Oxford poetry. The poet was Mrs. Woods, the poem 'Aëromancy.' This poem . . . captures and embodies the inmost spirit of Oxford. Without any disastrous loss of either form or colour, the artist, working in a medium where a language approximately reaches the effect of music, is able to give a new expression to atmosphere and emotion. The poet piercing further inward below the surface, draws the spirit of poetry from deeper recesses. . . . The music of the poetry calls out, attaches, gathers up about that point, the spirit of Oxford and makes it speak."

SOME PRESS OPINIONS

THE PRINCESS OF HANOVER

"It remained for Mrs. Woods to see the great poetic significance of the story [of Sophia Dorothea of Zell, Princess of Hanover] and its dramatic contrasts of love and hate, squalor and beauty, romantic passion and the most sordid pettiness of an intriguing court. . . . The tale is told with much spirit and vigour by Mrs. Woods . . . it abounds with passages of rare beauty and charm which ought once for all to settle the question whether the author, who long since won a considerable position as a novelist, is a poet as well. . . . To our mind, however, it is in the more passionate parts of the play, which describe events

or express ardent feeling, that Mrs. Woods has reached the highest point of her achievement. . . . The speech of the Electress to her daughter-in-law, in which she rebukes her for not wishing to be Queen of England . . . [we cannot] recall in the writings of any poet any stronger or more concentrated expression of 'the joy of Kingship' than in this really splendid passage. Or, again, we might quote the tender and beautiful love-scene between Königsmarck and the Princess. . . . But it is enough to indicate these passages as reaching a height which is very rarely attained by poets of any time."—*Times Literary Supplement*.

"The most notable addition made to literary drama in the year."—*Spectator*.

"Those who remember Mrs. Woods' other play, 'Wild Justice,' and the haunting lyric that ran through it, will look forward with peculiar pleasure to reading her new venture."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

"Turning next to poets and artists and asking what works of significance they have accomplished in the year, we may instance without prejudice, a remarkable achievement in . . . poetic drama—'The Princess of Hanover,' by Mrs. Margaret L. Woods . . . her rich and passionate verse . . . is her own creation."—*Academy and Literature*: Books of the year.

"Mrs. Woods has justified her theme by this powerful and impressive play."—*Westminster Gazette*.

"Mrs. Woods may do as she pleases. Her verse, however irregular, is always musical, her lyrics, whatever their rhymes, are full of beauty and grace."—*Liverpool Courier*.

"Exceptionally beautiful lyrics."—*The Dial, Chicago*.

"Mrs. Woods has achieved what has of late seemed impossible; she has written a drama that has literary quality without affectation and that is as interesting in its matter as it is attractive in its manner."—*New York Daily Tribune*.

AËROMANCY

"The beauty is abundant and satisfying. 'The Child Alone' . . . quite perfect of its kind."—*Spectator*.

"Mrs. Woods is a poet of great powers and originality. . . . Mrs. Woods has the art of verse."—*Globe*.

"'Aëromancy' is a fine poem."—*Sketch*.

"Mrs. Woods has already signed her name to so much of value that a new book of lyrics from her pen deserves every iota of the attention which it is bound to attract. Remembering past morsels of delight, all zealous searchers after true poetry will hasten to discover of what nature are the contents of the tiny volume contributed by Mrs. Woods to Elkin Matthews' Shilling Garland. . . . It deserves the votes, the shillings and the love of all who wish their shelves to carry the best examples of Song."—*Academy*.

"'Aëromancy' is a collection of short poems, all instinct with the same power, and the same richness of thought and language."—*Daily Mail*.

"Mrs. Woods' work has already gained for her a high reputation. . . . For depth of feeling, and charm of expression, she stands almost alone amongst living poets.

"Mrs. Woods. . . . She seems to me to possess the essential quality of a poet—imaginative passion.

" . . . a few miniatures I should like to hang on the line, in the small gallery of English lyrics. . . .

"One poem—'The Mariners Sleep by the Sea'—stands alone among its fellows for exquisiteness of sound-painting."—R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON, *Saturday Review*.

WILD JUSTICE

"This . . . passionate and powerful drama."—W. L. COURTNEY.

"Instinct with passion and power, and touched here and there with a quiet grace and charm, 'Wild Justice' is, indeed, what

its author terms it, a dramatic poem—intensely dramatic, and a poem of rare quality. . . . The splendid directness and intensity of Mrs. Woods' work. . . . The poem is so perfect a whole that to quote is to do injustice. . . . The fine ballad of which Nelto sings snatches . . . is too long for quotation, however much we may be tempted thereto by its vigour and beauty. . . . We warmly congratulate Mrs. Woods on this very fine poem."—*Athenæum*.

"Mrs. Woods has a fine imagination."—*Spectator*.

". . . full of vitality and force. . . . The quality of the poem is very fine."—*Daily Mail*.

POEMS OLD AND NEW

"Mrs. Woods evokes from unrhymed verse a depth and variety of harmony which we think have never been surpassed . . ."—*Daily Telegraph*.

"She creates something with vigorous, individual life."—*Daily News*.

"Her greatest success is in 'The May Morning and the Old Man' . . . it is too closely knit to be quoted, but it is a genuine piece of poetry and truth."—*Morning Post*.

"'Poems Old and New' have charm and character."—*The World*.

". . . Mrs. Woods displays her real lyric passion—a passion as intellectual as it is sincere."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

". . . She has that indefinable thing, — magic — which is another name for genius. . . . Where all is good it is hard to select."—*The Spectator*.

"Mrs. Woods certainly has a distinct place among modern women-poets."—*The Nation*.

"Equally near perfection . . . is a study . . . which for pure delicacy may rank as Mrs. Woods' highest achievement in verse."—DEAN BEECHING in *The Guardian*.

“The irregular rhymeless form adopted by Mrs. Woods for . . . ‘The Builders,’ does undoubtedly help to convey the effect she desires. . . . In ‘The Passing Bell,’ again, the same mystery is gained by the same means, and the regularly recurring phrase from the psalms which denotes the bell, strikes with all the more force for its surroundings. [‘The Builders’] is informed with a largeness of conception and a firm hope which give it greatness. ‘The May Morning and the Old Man’ is a pure delight; ‘Rest’ is exquisite. Yet, after all, we turn back inevitably to a poem which almost persuades us to renounce our plea for rhyme, so perfectly does its rhythmicalness express the yearning that gave it birth, in spite of the vividness of the pictures it goes on to paint: ‘O that I were lying under the Olives.’—*Times Literary Supplement*.



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